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**Manufacturing dissent in Russia:
A discursive psychological analysis of protesters' talk**

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**PhD
The University of Edinburgh
2016**

Declaration

I, Yulia Lukyanova, declare that this thesis has been composed by me and that this is my own work, except as specified. I also declare that this work has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

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Abstract

This study sets out to explore how people who took part in mass protests in Russia produce and negotiate accounts of their protest involvement in talk. Although there has been a proliferation of research on protest in Russia, especially after the first mass demonstration in December 2011, the existing literature tends to prioritise the role of structural and demographic factors in mobilising dissent. However, there has been little investigation into how protesters themselves account for protest involvement and how they make such factors relevant. In addition, no in-depth social psychological exploration of protesters' views has been conducted in Russia to date. This thesis addresses these gaps by offering a detailed empirical investigation of autobiographical accounts produced by Russian protesters regarding the reasons and motives for taking part in active protest and the subjective interpretations of what being a protester means.

Semi-structured interviews with 48 Russian participants were collected, transcribed and translated. The data were analysed within the framework of discursive social psychology (DP). The analysis focused on how particular descriptions were used by protesters in talk to justify and contest certain versions of reality, and on the social actions thereby accomplished.

The analysis led to novel insights into how protesters in Russia construct the causes and motives of their dissent, negotiate problematic identity categories and manage issues revolving around accountability and blame. For example, the analysis illustrated the potentially problematic nature of defining protesters' interests and objectives as 'political'. That is, when asked about their political attitudes, the interviewees actively justified these as not intentional. They mobilised various discursive resources to imply that they did not intend to become interested in politics and protest, but rather experienced situations that 'naturally' led to the acquisition of political interest. Similarly, when talking about motives for active protest participation, protesters tended to downplay explicitly political motivations. Instead, they portrayed their actions as a logical consequence of the deteriorating situation: some participants justified their involvement in terms of duty to defend their loved ones and the country in general, while others defended the

appropriateness of active resistance through invoking powerful negative emotions. Such accounts functioned to protect protesters from being seen as motivated by personal or economic concerns, and warranted active protest as the only available means to address the unjust state of affairs in the country.

Furthermore, I have shown that identifying with the label of ‘opposition’ is problematic for protesters, with oppositional membership being either denied or delimited in a number of ways. For example, the analysis demonstrated how respondents accomplished denials by making claims about the activities and attributes associated with the category of ‘member of the opposition’ and by invoking the negative connotations of the very term ‘opposition’. The instances of self-ascription of opposition membership further illustrated the sensitive nature of the topic: affirmation accounts were often modified to delimit the extent and nature of membership, with it being portrayed as a logical consequence of a speaker’s views, rather than in terms of emotional or psychological basis, such as shared identity or desire to belong.

Finally, my study focused on the arguments relating to the people who do not protest. Interestingly, I found that, despite routinely warranting rationality and necessity of active protest, respondents portrayed the passive members of the public as not blameworthy. The behaviour of non-protesters was justified through attributing it to various practical hindrances and to specific cultural/generational mindsets, thereby placing it outside of peoples’ control.

Overall, my thesis contributes to the social psychological literature on protest, by providing a complementary model of contention through the prism of protesters’ own orientations. The study demonstrated that, for protesters in Russia, protest experiences appear to be closely linked with interpersonal and normative considerations, with dissent being manufactured as a necessary and inherently moral act aimed at protecting Russia and its people. The study thus illustrated the utility of putting people’s accounts at the forefront of the analysis and treating them as valuable in their own right. In adopting a novel methodological approach to exploring protest realities as products of interaction, this thesis created an opportunity for a better understanding of the complexities and challenges of popular protest in Russia.

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*Я верую в отдельных людей, и вижу спасение в отдельных личностях,
разбросанных по России там и сям, - интеллигенты они или мужики, -
в них сила, хотя их и мало.*

*I believe in certain people, and I see salvation in certain people, scattered
across Russia here and there, - they might be intellectuals or simple peasants, -
they have the power, despite being a minority.*

Anton Chekhov (1899), from the letter to I. I. Orlov

*Перемен! Требуют наши сердца.
Перемен! Требуют наши глаза.
В нашем смехе и в наших слезах,
И в пульсации вен.
Перемен!
Мы ждем перемен.*

*Change! Our hearts demand it.
Change! Our eyes demand it.
It's in our laughter and our tears,
And in the very pulse of our veins.
Change!
We are waiting for the change.*

Soviet rock band Kino (1986), from the song 'Change'

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Introduction

This thesis began with a fascination with the Russian protest movement, a fascination inspired by people who, after decades of relative inaction, took to the streets of my country's towns and cities to voice their indignation at the government and to demand change. Fascination led to questions about why and how such societal 'awakening' had become possible. While many scholars of Russia were (and still are) interested in discovering the underlying factors that caused large-scale mobilization, my primary interest was with how people themselves understood and explained what they were doing and why they were doing it. Thus, the main aim of this thesis became to explore the ways in which people who participated in protests in Russia produced and negotiated accounts of protest in talk.

Popular protests are commonly understood as important vehicles for social change (Tarrow, 1998). They give opportunities for people to express their dissatisfaction and exercise civic power, and in so doing, change their own lives through changing the life of their country. Popular protest movements also offer access to the 'politics of common people' (Bowen, 1980), that is, they demonstrate views and understandings that have not yet become a part of the political reality, but which are already present and shared among the people who are prepared to defend and actively promote them. Drawing on this, Melucci (1996, p. 1) has famously described people's protests as 'prophets of the present'. What he meant was that, together with expressing the will of the people, protests signal deep societal transformations, by showing that the change demanded by those who protest is, in a way, already there — in the form of new meanings and norms that are being communicated, and are therefore *already* as 'real' as the notions against which people protest. Protests can thus be seen as 'windows' to society itself, and therefore present a worthy topic of investigation, in particular due to their ability to shed light on the very mechanics of social change.

In Russia, too, protests and popular uprisings have played an important role in shaping society for centuries, with a number of profound social and political transformations accomplished through revolt. The most famous examples from the

modern era are, of course, the revolutions of 1917 that put an end to tsarist rule, and the events of the 1990s signifying the end of the Communist regime and transforming the country from the Soviet Union to the Russian Federation. After the turbulent 1990s which saw the dissolution of communism, the country seemingly settled down, content with its new president Vladimir Putin and his promises to establish a strong democratic state, ruled by law and governed through viable political competition. These promises, however, turned into pipe dreams as early as 2004, with Putin's re-election as president of the Russian Federation (Fish, 2005). After this, it became increasingly clear that the regime was taking a turn away from democracy and towards greater authoritarianism.

Currently, the political situation in Russia is rather grim. Carefully constructed 'power vertical' (*vertikal' vlasti*, top-down system of governance) hinges essentially on one man, Putin himself, and political competition is all but non-existent (March, 2009). In 2012, Putin was re-elected as president, reportedly with minimal falsifications, which is not surprising given that people simply had no options to choose from, because all truly oppositional candidates were banned from running for office. Indeed, Putin remained in power from 2000, mainly unchallenged, and supported by the people. That is, until late December 2011, when Russia and the world witnessed Putin's regime being confronted with large-scale street demonstrations, with thousands of people questioning the results of the Parliamentary elections and accusing the government of illegitimacy. While the protesters were in the minority, the demonstrations of late 2011 and early 2012 were the largest since Perestroika in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Greene, 2014). So once again, Russia was in uproar. Between 2011 and 2013, numerous large-scale protest actions took place against the rising levels of state control, widespread corruption and nepotism, and infringement of democratic freedoms guaranteed by the constitution, such as the freedom of speech and gathering. At the same time, local civic initiatives started to develop across various cities, focused on issues of ecology, preservation of historical monuments, protection of local parks and forests and so on.

Mass protests demonstrated that people in Russia were not as apathetic as they had often been portrayed. Importantly, protests challenged the predominant view of Russian

civil society as weak and dormant (Gel'man, 2013) and demonstrated that common people do care about what is going on in the country and are prepared to challenge the status quo.

The unanticipated, and hence intriguing, nature of Russian protests and their unprecedented scale have brought them into the focus of scholarly attention; now, a substantial research bank on the topic exists. Much of this research focuses on structural factors and mechanisms that provoked mobilisation in Russia, and on the role that various demographic factors played in triggering protests. Considerably fewer studies have looked at the social psychological determinants of protest involvement, but none of these paid sufficient attention to participants' own understandings and the details of meaning construction in talk. At the same time, sociological studies that did take note of what participants actually said tended to treat people's accounts as straightforward descriptions of what 'really' happened or of what speakers 'really' felt and thought. Such studies are thus limited in their ability to explore the functional nature of language use; that is, the ways in which protesters manage various normative and interpersonal issues in interaction. However, awareness of such ways and the issues that protesters address through them is paramount if we, as researchers, are to comprehend people's own stance on protest matters and help them in their struggle for positive social change.

This situation demonstrates a lacuna in the literature, which occasions the need for more information and deeper understanding. My doctoral research attempts to address this need, by exploring protesters' own understandings and considering the pragmatic nature of people's descriptions. The study uses the qualitative approach of discursive psychology, which is particularly well placed to study the discursive construction of protest empirically and gain insight into the constitutive role of language in bringing protest matters and concerns to life. Such an approach also allows us to explore issues that are not necessarily mentioned in theory and in literature, but which can nonetheless be important to the protesters themselves.

Structure of the thesis

In the first chapter of the thesis, I review the relevant literature, starting with a brief historical overview of the rise and fall of popular protest in Russia, and then sketching the timeline of 2011-2012 wave of protest. Next, I discuss three categories of studies of Russian protest: ‘systemic’ approach studies, which explore the role of ‘objective’ factors, such as resources and political structures, in the mobilisation of dissent; ‘class’ approach studies, which explain protest as a result of the emerging middle class; and ‘psychological’ approach studies, which focus on various individual and intergroup factors as the driving force behind protest participation in Russia. I argue that while these studies certainly offer valuable insights, there is a notable lack of specific social psychological research on protest in Russia. I then give a review of the relevant approaches to the study of collective behaviour within social psychology, including cognitive and discursive research. I conclude the chapter by arguing that discursive research offers useful insights with regard to the construction of protest in various cultural contexts, but little attention has been paid to Russia, which creates a gap in the literature that my study can begin to fill in.

Chapter 2 introduces the methodology of the study, in particular justifying the choice of discursive psychology as a general methodological framework, by comparing it with other discourse-oriented approaches. I subsequently address the method of data collection, discussing sampling strategies, the interview process and ethical considerations. I argue that qualitative interviews provide appropriate data for exploring how people construct and negotiate versions of protest reality in talk. I then describe the process of data analysis, and conclude the chapter with a discussion of methodological issues related to the use of interview data in discursive psychology and practices of translation.

Chapter 3 is the first empirical chapter, where I begin the analysis of the discursive construction of protest by exploring how protesters talk about their interests in politics. The chapter demonstrates that talking about one’s political views is a sensitive topic, by analysing various strategies that speakers use in order to justify their ‘turning political’; namely, the portrayal of political interest as fostered by others, presenting it as a result of

a problematic experience and positioning it as an outcome of learning about the political situation. The chapter also shows that interviewees are concerned with matters of intent, as they design their accounts to imply that they did not intend to become interested in politics in the first place. In the discussion, I relate these findings to the broader situation in Russia, specifically to the idea that in Russia, being interested in politics for no reason risks coming across as in some way deviant or at least suspicious. I argue that the design of speakers' formulations is an interactional resource for dealing with such a risk.

In order to develop a better understanding of people's reasons for mobilisation, in Chapter 4 I focus on how protesters talk about their motives for becoming actively involved in protest. In the course of analysis, I identify two broad strategies of portraying active involvement as legitimate. The first strategy centres around the idea of protest as a duty, with speakers orienting to the obligational and instrumental role that protesting plays in improving the highly problematic state of affairs in the country. In the second strategy, protest involvement is portrayed as an expected outcome of negative emotional experiences that speakers had after witnessing the flaws of the system first-hand. Concerns with rationality and selflessness of behaviour appear to permeate both strategies, and the findings shed light on certain interpersonal issues related to talking about one's active protest involvement in Russia. For example, I suggest that the depiction of protest participation as a rational and deliberate choice both attends to, and counters, the official media's depiction of protesters as pliable people who were simply 'brainwashed' into action by political leaders.

Ample research from social psychology shows that studying protesters' 'identity politics', including subjective perception of belonging, is paramount for our understanding of contentious behaviour. In Chapter 5, then, I approach this idea empirically and examine how protesters manage their 'oppositional' belonging in talk. This chapter focuses on the particular strategies through which oppositional membership is accepted and rejected. The analysis shows that the negotiation of identity is a delicate business, and is closely linked to the construction of category-bound attributes of 'the opposition', including actions, motives and attitudes. In particular, it appears that affiliation with the label of opposition is problematic due to its political and

institutionalised connotations. However, analysis shows that rejecting oppositional affiliation is not an easy task either, and requires careful work in order to be accomplished. I suggest that such findings provide evidence of speakers being engaged in a certain discursive ‘struggle’ regarding their legitimacy as participants in the study.

After exploring protesters’ constructions of their subjective attitudes, motives and identities, I conclude the empirical part in Chapter 6, by looking at the ways in which respondents approach the ‘puzzle’ of public inaction. The chapter investigates how the people who are actively involved in protest explain why other people *are not* involved, *even though* protest appears to be essential for addressing the situation in the country (hence, the ‘puzzle’). Analysis shows that speakers deal with the issue by accounting for non-participants’ behaviour in various ways, for example, by identifying practical obstacles to protesting and by portraying inaction as a direct and unavoidable consequence of living under the Soviet state. Furthermore, the analysis illustrates how interviewees manage issues of blame and responsibility, through reducing the deliberateness of protest-related indifference and portraying inaction as reasonable behaviour given the circumstances of people’s lives. The findings of the chapter also suggest that speakers can negotiate the very idea of involvement, by claiming that people can be meaningfully involved in ways other than street protest; specifically, by doing work for the benefit of local communities and making personal choices to live in ethical ways.

Chapter 7 brings together the main findings of the study, discussing them in relation to each other and to a broader context. I summarise the analyses and attempt to present a coherent story that emerges from it, arguing that one of the main functions of such a story is to justify being a protester in a cultural context where protest is not generally recognised as normative. I also discuss the contributions my study makes, focusing in particular on the advantage of using a discursive methodological lens to study the topic of protest in Russia. Subsequently, I provide some reflections, discussing how I, as a person and the researcher, might have influenced the work, how the work in turn changed me and how my study can be developed in future. I finish by reiterating the importance of studying how versions of protest reality are manufactured and negotiated

in talk in the 'hybrid' context of Russia (Robertson, 2011), where protesting is neither a normal nor completely abnormal way of acting.

Chapter 1. Literature review

The expansion of popular dissent over the last century has put the phenomenon of social movements in the spotlight of academic research. The beginning of the twenty-first century saw large waves of protest happening across the globe, from the Colour Revolutions in the countries of the former Soviet Union to the popular opposition against the government in Thailand, from the Arab Spring to the Occupy Wall Street movement in the United States, to non-systemic opposition rallies in Russia. What unites these social movements is the attempt to challenge governmental elites and their ways, and to protests against the social inequality; as such, they have been described as ‘contentious politics’ (Tarrow, Tilly & McAdam, 2001; Tilly & Tarrow, 2007). It has been argued that contentious politics is the main tool for advancing societies in terms of democratic development (Melucci, 1996), with popular contention being a vital precondition for social change (Hornsey et al., 2006; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). When people take to the streets to voice their grievances, to whatever end, it subjectively affects them as well as bringing changes to their societies. The change, although it can be desired or needed, is often accompanied by periods of violence and instability; this is one of the reasons why public perceptions of protest are often ambivalent, ranging from open support to open hostility. The factor that influences perceptions to a great extent is the way the protesters are portrayed: the stories that are told about them by the media, local people or protesters themselves (Polletta, 2006). Such stories undeniably have an impact on the perceived legitimacy of protest, on how it is treated by the public, and on the practices and policies in relation to those who protest.

Regarding the recent protests in Russia, there has been a variety of studies examining the reasons for popular protest mobilisation from various analytic standpoints, drawing both on large-scale survey research (Robertson, 2011; Rose, Mishler & Munro, 2011; Gudkov, 2012a; Gudkov, Dubin & Zorkaya, 2011) and on ethnographic research based on interviews and observations (Clément, 2013; 2015; Greene, 2014; Volkov, 2012a; 2012b). However, there have been virtually no cases of application of dominant

socio-psychological theories to recent civil protests in Russia, nor have there been attempts to explore protest through a discursive-psychological lens.

The ‘how’ and ‘why’ of the wave of protest which occurred in 2011-2012 is the focus of the majority of existing research (Cheskin & March, 2015). However, while sociological and political studies of protests in Russia offer many valuable insights, they tend to sketch a rather generic picture, in which little attention is paid to what protest means for people, or how it is experienced and perceived in relation to local socio-cultural context. Another potential issue with much of the existent research on Russian protest is that it can give an impression of protests arising solely from various objective factors (e.g state abuse of power, proliferation of economically stable middle class and so on). While some studies, predominantly from within Russia, pointed to the importance of psychological determinants for the 2011-2012 protests (Agadullina & Lovakov, 2013; Savchenko, 2012; Shestopal, 2012), those authors did not take into account contemporary research in social psychology. Similarly, in the Western academic world, the Russian context has not been examined, perhaps due to the proximity of protests and their more ‘ordinary’ civil nature (in comparison to voluminous literature on political ‘revolutionary’ protests in Tunisia or Egypt). Moreover, very few psychological studies to date have addressed the question of how protesters themselves account for their actions and how in so doing they discursively shape their own image and that of the broader society. In what follows, I will review the literature on protest in Russia as well as discuss the relevant approaches to the study of collective behaviour within social psychology.

1. Setting the scene: historical roots of popular protest in Russia

Before I turn to the events that lie at the heart of this thesis — the mass protests of 2011-2012 — I will give a brief overview of the main landmarks in the history of social uprisings in Russia. This short section will show that, contrary to the research envisioning Russian masses as inherently apolitical, submissive and anti-democratic (Ashwin, 1999; Colton & McFaul, 2002; Howard, 2003; Payin, 2007), the conflict between the state and its citizens in Russia in fact has a long and prolific history.

In tsarist Russia, mass protests were plentiful. The seventeenth century has even received the name *Buntashny*¹ (Rebellious) due to an abundance of popular uprisings, among which Salt (1648), Copper (1662), and Archers' (1682) riots were the most famous. Moreover, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the country was shaken by the four large-scale peasant rebellions, which are known as 'the four Peasant Wars' (see, for example, Orlov, Georgiev, Georgieva & Sivohina, 2004). While the leaders of those rebellions initially were able to mobilise large numbers of people, the uprisings were eventually suppressed by the government and in fact contributed to the consolidation of the tsarist regime in the 17th-18th century. In the first half of the nineteenth century, the famous Decembrist revolt took place. In contrast to the populist protests of the earlier centuries, the Decembrists were predominantly aristocrats who hoped to modernise Russia in the manner of Europe and bring about democratic reforms, such as abolition of serfdom. In 1825, a number of officers refused to swear allegiance to the new Tsar and organised a stand-off at Senate Square in Saint Petersburg. After failed negotiations, the protesters were dispersed by the Tsar's loyal troops and the movement's leaders were executed. The demise of the Decembrists brought about another wave of regime consolidation; however, it also became an important landmark for future opponents of an autocratic state, and in a way became a starting point for the anti-tsarist struggle that culminated in the Revolution of 1917 (Offord, 2014).

So, while eventful, the story of popular opposition to the regime in pre-1917 Russia is largely a narrative of unsuccessful and failed attempts to bring about a change. By contrast, contentious actions of the beginning of the twentieth century were more successful. Across the major cities of the Russian Empire, numerous labour strikes took place, with workers demanding not only economic, but political changes, such as the dissolution of the tsarist regime and introduction of democratic freedoms (Orlov et al.,

¹ The transliteration system I use throughout this thesis is the standard British one (it can be found, for example, in the Europe-Asia Studies journal guidelines). For the titles of some Russian publications, however, I follow the spelling used by the authors in the English version where it is available; thus, there may be slight difference between the spelling of a word in the text and in the References section.

2004). Peasants, too, rioted frequently and made pleas for both economic and political reforms. Importantly, the civil liberal opposition started to develop on the basis of district councils, with historians, lawyers, economists and publicists coming together to put forward demands for moderate political changes, such as the formation of a constitutional monarchy. At the same time, many members of the pro-democratic intelligentsia started to radicalise and unite into revolutionary political parties; in 1898, the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party was formed by Vladimir Lenin and his associates.

The socio-political turmoil put Russia on the brink of a major historical state-citizen conflict. First, the Revolution of 1905-1907 resulted in the creation of the State Duma (Parliament) and the oppositional Constitutional Democratic Party. Then, the two revolutions of 1917 — in February and October — brought an end to tsarism and established a new political regime. This is not the place to discuss the details of the events that took place, and whether it was indeed a ‘people’s movement’, but it has been argued that mass mobilisation of the common people — specifically the numerous members of agrarian movements and low-level labour unions — was the driving force behind the success of the October Revolution (Keep, 1976).

The adoption of the new set of political ideals in now Soviet Russia — ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’ — established a framework within which any form of organised opposition, political or civic, was not tolerated. The leaders of the Bolshevik Party were open in their intent to suppress dissenters: they portrayed suppression as a necessary measure in protecting the new Soviet states (Powell, 1972). Moreover, the Party’s directives had implications for the term *oppozitsiya* (opposition) itself. Schapiro (1972) has argued that the very use of the word ‘opposition’ by Lenin was intended to smear the Bolshevik’s political opponents as traitors, disloyal to Russia and its people. He also suggested that this negative association was maintained by both Joseph Stalin and Nikita Khrushchev, making distrust of any ‘oppositional’ actions into a characteristic feature of the Soviet mentality. While I do not argue that similar negative meanings of the label ‘opposition’ are still in play, it is important to keep in mind the troublesome historical connotations of it in the Russian context.

That is not to say, however, that there was no opposition in the Soviet Union. Scholars of Soviet dissent agree that during the first few decades of Soviet rule the protest was extremely limited, largely because the Communist Party had erected a formidable barrier that prevented people from engaging in organised protests. For instance, Stalin's Great Purge of the late 1930s destroyed the majority of the organised political opposition (Saunders, 1974), and a comprehensive state censorship system prevented free distribution of virtually all sources of information (Orlov et al., 2004). Yet, the dissent blossomed again in the era of Khrushchev's Thaw.

The official narrative of de-Stalinisation in the 1960s encouraged a freer public debate in the mass media, among scholars, writers and other members of the intelligentsia. Oppositional political tendencies started to surface, both among the party members and among the more ordinary citizens (Powell, 1972; Skilling, 1972). Of course, the degree to which the opposition was able to express itself was still rather limited by the regime, with open dissent being harshly punished. For example, in 1966 writers Andrei Sinyavsky and Yuli Daniel were imprisoned for publishing anti-Soviet satirical works abroad. Another illustration is the famous case of 1968 demonstration against the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, where eight people came to Moscow's Red Square, holding a Czechoslovak flag and banners with anti-invasion slogans. Out of eight protesters, six faced charges, including exile and incarceration in psychiatric institutions. In the late 1960s, a number of human rights organisations were created, for instance the Initiative Group for the Defence of Human Rights in the USSR and the Human Rights Committee, the latter founded on the initiative of the famous Soviet academician Andrei Sakharov. These organisations did not advocate the overthrow the regime, but argued instead for the observance of civic rights and democratic freedoms, for the government's accountability to its people and against the exclusive privileges of bureaucratic officials (Saunders, 1974).

Alongside overt dissent, more implicit forms of protest were developing in late socialism. Schapiro (1972) has noted that in Soviet Russia, the so-called 'apolitical' dissent was a particularly resilient form of popular opposition. Because of the dangers associated with street demonstrations, dissenters stayed largely hidden, expressing their dissatisfaction in the form of anonymous letters and collective petitions, and by collecting

and publishing *samizdat* (self-published) writings, most notably the *Chronicle of Current Events*, a magazine that documented cases of political prosecution and violation of human rights in the USSR (Hosking, 1990). Soviet citizens demonstrated their rejection of the government's authority through private acts: by sharing *samizdat* uncensored materials with friends, by going to underground rock concerts and poetry readings and by gathering around the kitchen table to talk about the wrongs of the regime (Evans, 2006).

While the years of Brezhnev *zastoi* (stagnation; 1964-1982) turned out to be more peaceful with regard to overt social protest than Khrushchev's, it was in the 1970s-early 1980s that the foundation for the popular uprising during *perestroika* was laid (Kozlov, 2002; *perestroika* was a state policy of restructuring the economic and political system, offered by Leonid Brezhnev and actively promoted later by Mikhail Gorbachev). Tracing the development of social unrest in the USSR, Kozlov pointed out that under Brezhnev people became disillusioned with the socialist regime; by the end of it, communist ideals were 'practically squeezed out of mass consciousness by the conformism, consumerism, and individualism' (pp. 313-314). This situation resulted in many Soviet people living a 'double life' (Boobbyer, 2000), where public and private spheres were divided. In the open, people conformed to the rules of the state, participating in its many rituals and procedures; their private opinions, however, often ran contrary to the official ideology. The decrease in protest activity therefore did not resemble the absence of protest moods; if anything, it was an indirect sign of the Soviet regime's failure, as there was not much sense in actively protesting against the system that existed largely in name only.

This argument echoes the one made by Yurchak (2005) in his brilliant examination of people's life under late socialism. Yurchak suggested that the ideological practices of Brezhnev's USSR were highly ritualised, meaning that the formal expression of support for communism was maintained, but it rarely resembled people's true ideological devotion. He argued that under such paradoxical conditions, Soviet people did not see the value of taking a strong stance against the state. The tactic was to dissociate oneself from the system and focus instead on inner freedom, by interacting with *svoi* (ours), the inner circle of like-minded friends and family. Yurchak explained that, perhaps surprisingly, such

political detachment and ‘inner’ dissent in fact had a destabilising effect on the Soviet regime, through generating alternative meanings:

various local milieus of *svoi* and their practices [...] were actively engaged in and productive of a shifting socialist system. These milieus and practices demonstrate that the supposed spatial and temporal linearity and totality of late socialism became everywhere injected with new forms of diversity, plurality, and indeterminacy. (p. 157).

So the paradox at the core of the late Soviet system, where the nominal socialist public sphere coexisted with the oppositional private sphere, contributed to the dismantling of the state from within, even in the absence of active mass dissent. The late Soviet years thus created a framework within which the radical restructuring of the country — Gorbachev’s *perestroika* — and the subsequent demise of the communist regime in the late 1980s and early 1990s became possible.

In contrast to the Soviet leaders before him, Gorbachev did not oppose such civic and political mobilisation; indeed, he actively encouraged it by giving freedom to the informal organisations and refusing to use military forces to suppress the opposition (Kramer, 2009). One of the important consequences of Gorbachev’s reforms was the creation of numerous NGOs and the general rise of civil society (Evans, 2006; White, 1993). While the NGOs were initially oriented towards cultural and leisure activities, by the end of the 1980s some became increasingly politicised and started to advocate radical democratic changes. At the same time, new political parties and movements started to appear, following the government’s repeal of the law that ensured the Communist Party’s leading role in society. Such opposition ‘awakening’ created favourable conditions for a political change. On the one hand, there was a growing rift between the various factions within the Soviet state. At the same time, the risks of engaging in overt contentious actions decreased dramatically, and people were becoming more willing to take to the streets to voice their discontent with the now largely unpopular Communist party (Sakwa, 2008). This situation culminated in the events of August 1991, when a large-scale civil mobilisation brought thousands of people to the streets of Moscow in an attempt to defend the Russian White House, the building which housed the government, against the coup

d'état forces. The coup failed, Gorbachev resigned as General Secretary of the Communist party, Boris Yeltsin became the first President of the Russian Federation, and the Soviet Union ceased to exist. As for large-scale popular dissent in Russia, it seemed to go into a long period of hibernation (Rose, Mishler & Munro, 2006).

Dissent in the post-Soviet era

Examining the patterns of public dissent in the 1990s, Robertson (2011) suggested that although economic stagnation and the growing crisis of power, particularly in Yeltsin's second term, resulted in a number of protests, there was no protest *movement* as such. Protesters' demands were usually material in nature, and thus specific to a particular time, place and the group making them; the local nature of protests prevented people from developing the sense of solidarity and shared oppositional identity, needed for the formation of a broader social movement. To quote Robertson, 'the collectives involved [in the protest cycle of 1990s] were local and based on a sense of identity embedded in the particular workplace or local community' (p. 65).

Transition of political power at the end of 1999 went smoothly: against the background of the ailing Yeltsin, the relatively young and decisive Vladimir Putin quickly won the support of both the political elites and the Russian public (Shevtsova, 2007b). In March 2000, Putin won the elections in the first round and became the new president of the Russian Federation.

During Putin's first 4-year term, only a handful of local economic protests took place. The sporadic nature of those protests, their localised character and the absence of an oppositional political agenda led some observers to suggest that political opposition in Russia was 'a dying species' (Gel'man, 2005). It has been argued that one of the main factors contributing to the low levels of protest activity during that time was the depoliticising effect of the Putin regime (Byzov, 2008; Gel'man, 2015; Petukhov, 2008; Shevtsova, 2013). For example, discussing state ideology under Putin, Makarychev (2008) observed that the government put a lot of effort into dissociating the sphere of politics from that of economics, religion and culture. In practical terms, that meant that

civil society underwent rapid depoliticisation, and its mobilising potential was severely hampered. Mass media was warned not to trespass into the domain of politics: one of its most 'political' channels, NTV, was drastically restructured and two other independent channels were shut down. Non-governmental organisations were similarly told to keep out of politics, and campaigns were launched against some internationally funded NGOs, accusing them of being the agents of harmful foreign influence. The official political sphere too witnessed a dramatic decline in the number of 'worthy' political opponents. March (2009) argued that during Putin's presidency, the majority of both parliamentary and non-parliamentary oppositional parties in Russia became 'parastatal'; that is, they were essentially controlled by the state and used to channel the opposition in directions convenient for the regime. In the State Duma, Putin's United Russia party have had a clear majority presence since 2003, and Kremlin's decision to abandon popular elections of regional governors in 2005 gave the president additional power to control political opponents at the local level. Makarychev (2008, p. 66) thus concluded that 'the very idea of opposition under Putin was devoid of political content'.

Among ordinary people, a lack of interest in politics became widespread; this attitude seemed to hold throughout the 2000s. Survey studies offer evidence here. According to research by Gudkov, Dubin and Zorkaya (2008), 60-75% of the respondents in late 2000s reported a lack of interest in politics. These numbers are consistent with VCIOM (2012) study, which found that 61% were not interested in the political life of the country. According to Gudkov et al. (2008), the main reasons for the lack of interest in politics among 'lay' people were the perceived inability to influence Russia's political sphere (82%) and the resulting decline of responsibility for what was happening in the country/city/district (66%). Russians also tended to have little knowledge of how political systems work: Gudkov (2012a) argued that nearly half of his respondents had a rather vague idea of how the Parliament functions, with 39% saying they had absolutely no knowledge on the topic.

Further studies into the nature of Putin's 'sovereign democracy' have shown that depoliticisation of Russian society was accompanied by strong quasi-populist rhetoric. For instance, Casula (2013) highlighted that systemic populism 'from above' was a

notable feature of post-2000 state discourse, seeking to present Putin as the sole strong leader and defender of ‘the people’. Such discourse, Casula argued, contributed to creation of the symbolic rift in the society, with people splitting into supporters and opponents of ‘Putin’s plan’, and to the portrayal of the anti-Putin opposition as unpatriotic extremists and the agents of the ‘fifth column’. Such propaganda drastically reduced the opposition’s chances of mobilising mass support, and placed it firmly on the outside of official politics. At the same time, Putin’s own tough rhetoric and his aggressive military actions against the separatist republic of Chechnya continued to earn popular support, which additionally contributed to the lessening of anti-government sentiment among the people (Colton & McFaul, 2003).

Despite the seeming civic apathy among Russian citizens, early 2005 saw the first Putin-era instance of large-scale social mobilisation, when thousands of people across various cities in Russia came out to the streets to voice their dissatisfaction with the so-called ‘monetisation’ law, which transformed a range of in-kind benefits into monetary compensations. Among other things, the law took away pensioners’ right to free public transport. This was crucial for bringing about protests, as it directly affected one of the most politically mobilised sections of Russian society, older people, who were politically socialised in the protest-rich Khrushchev and Brezhnev eras (Evans, 2012; Robertson, 2011). The impact was not simply financial (for many, monetary compensation was only partial and did not cover transportation costs), but also symbolic, since the right to free transport carried special significance, because it was seen as an expression of state respect for pensioners. Another key group of people who were actively dissatisfied with the law were those who, under the new law, could no longer travel at no cost between jurisdictional regions, such as Moscow and the neighbouring town of Khimki. Robertson (2011) pointed out that the main reason for the quick popular mobilisation was a set of powerful economic grievances that directly impacted people’s lives; however, he also observed that while material deprivation was the driving force behind the demonstrations, some activists also used political slogans, calling for respect of political and civil rights.

The 2005 *l’gotniki* (benefit holders) movement marked the beginning of a new protest cycle in Russia, and laid the preconditions for the mass mobilisation of 2011

(Greene, 2014). Importantly, while the anti-monetisation demonstrations of 2005 were predominantly economic, non-material demands became much more prevalent in the period of 2007-2009, with political protests against the national authorities being on the rise (Lankina & Savrasov, 2009). Other issues, such as the environment, city development and civil rights (such as the right to assembly, minority rights, etc.) too started coming into the focus of protesters' attention.

A useful summary of the 2005-2011 mass protests, offered by Evans (2012), demonstrates the scope of the issues that mobilised popular support. It includes the already discussed protests by elderly people against monetisation in 2005; environmental protests against building an oil pipeline near Lake Baikal in 2006 and the 2008-2010 environmental movement in defence of the Khimki forest near Moscow; a number of rallies organised by car owners in the Russia's Far Eastern regions in 2008-2009 against a steep increase in the tariff on imported cars; a widely publicised 2009 strike against the closing of a factory by the workers of the town of Pikalevo; the resonant case of 2009-2010 public protest against the construction of Gazprom's (Russian natural gas monopoly) skyscraper in the centre of Saint Petersburg; and 2009-2010 Moscow protests against the demolition of a historical residential neighbourhood. As can be seen, protests did not decrease but in fact escalated under Dmitry Medvedev's presidency (2008-2012). In their study, Smyth, Soboleva, Shimek and Sobolev (2015) proposed that the multitude of pre-2011 protests could be divided into three major types. The first group included protests against various economic policies, such as worker's strike in Pikalevo and the anti-monetisation movement. The second group incorporated anti-government and anti-regime protests, such as Strategy-31 demonstrations, a series of civic protests in support of the right to freedom of assembly, which is guaranteed by Article 31 of the Russian Constitution (hence the name). Finally, the authors suggested calling the third group 'local grievances protests', including ecological protests, protests against the abuse of traffic laws by the Society of Blue Buckets and historic/cultural preservation movements. Evans (2012) and Smyth et al. (2015) agree that although in the majority of these protests the participants were quite cautious with advocating political reforms (see also Clément, Miryasova & Demidov, 2010; Magun, 2014), these various forms of protest provided

opportunities for consolidation of dissatisfied citizens and created favourable conditions under which the 2011-2012 wave of protest was able to happen.

To summarise, the above review shows that social protest, in one form or another, has been a constant presence throughout Russian history. At the same time, however, it demonstrates that there is a complex set of tensions associated with protest behaviour in Russia. For instance, in historical context, dissent often took place in extremely adverse conditions of the tsarist and communist regimes; it was often brutally suppressed and unsuccessful in bringing about positive change. Overt expression of protest was thus associated with high risk and little potential benefit. This is not to suggest that such associations are similarly prevalent among contemporary Russians; however, they do present a historical background against which the post-Soviet protests were developing.

Next, I move on from the historical overview to the examination of the 2011-2012 protest timeline, and then to the discussion of the various scholarly approaches to the recent (2011-2012) wave of protests in Russia.

Timeline of the 2011-2012 protests

The consolidation of Putin's regime from 2000 onward resulted in the construction of a semi-authoritarian state, in which increasingly anti-opposition state propaganda contributed to near extinction of official political opposition and to expansion of apolitical attitudes among the public (Robertson, 2011). The state actively undermined dissent in other ways too, by placing legal limits on democratic rights, such as the right to assemble, and narrowing possibilities for democracy-promotion groups and other nongovernmental organisations (Volkov, 2012b). Nonetheless, despite the state attempts to subdue political dissent, from 2005 there started to appear more and more public uprisings, first economic and then increasingly political in nature; those clearly demonstrated the growing dissatisfaction with the Putin/Medvedev regime.

In September 2011, the then-prime minister Putin and then-president Medvedev made a political manoeuvre that came to be called a 'castling move' (*rokirovka*). During the United Russia congress, Medvedev announced that he would not run for the second

presidential term allowed by the Constitution, but instead would ‘recommend’ Putin to be the main presidential candidate. In turn, Putin suggested that Medvedev should become the prime minister after the elections of 2012 (Elder, 2011). As argued by de Vogel (2013), *rokirovka* laid the foundation for the December protest movement, by sparking anger and frustration with respect to United Russia and the leaders of the country among the people. In a way, the castling move was so damning because it confirmed what many had long suspected, namely that Medvedev was a political puppet, and that Putin had remained the *de facto* leader of Russia since 2000 (Lipman & Petrov, 2012).

The final turning point was the Duma elections on the 4th December 2011. The Duma is the lower house of the Federal Assembly of Russia, the legislative body of the country, whose members are elected for a five-year term. There has been evidence to suggest that previous legislative elections, both on federal and local levels, were grossly falsified (Gudkov, 2012b; Volkov, 2012b); yet, that falsification did not result in mass mobilisation (Myagkov, Ordeshook & Shakin, 2009). On December 5th, however, after it became clear that United Russia had once again won a majority of seats in the Duma, thousands of protesters went to the streets to show their indignation over results that they believed to be rigged. Some heard about falsifications through election-monitoring organisations, such as the Voice (*Golos*) and Citizen Observer (*Grazhdanin Nablyudatel*’), who reported the fraud (Volkov, 2012c); others witnessed falsifications first-hand while observing the elections. The practice of election observation in Russia existed before, but it tended to be carried out by professionals, such as political activists and journalists. In late 2011, however, and especially after the mass protests gained momentum in 2012, more unaffiliated, ‘lay’ observers started to appear. It was those people who started spreading the word about hundreds of witnessed election violations, such as ballot stuffing, ‘merry-go-round’ multiple voting (*karuseli*) and election committee members tampering with the final result lists. For the first time in Russia, the evidence of fraud was openly shared on the Internet; social networking was used widely to mobilise sympathisers (Bennett, 2012; Koesel & Bunce, 2012; White, 2015).

The first, smaller-scale, demonstrations were held in Moscow and Saint Petersburg immediately after the election day, on the 5th December. In Moscow, the demonstration

was pre-arranged by the activists of the Solidarity (*Solidarnost'*) movement who were joined, somewhat unexpectedly, by several thousand people, including old-time opposition leaders Boris Nemtsov (former Deputy Prime Minister of Russia) and Vladimir Ryzhkov, younger activists Alexei Navalny, Sergei Udaltsov and Evgeniya Chirikova, a number of prominent journalists as well as a large number of unaffiliated citizens. Protesters demanded the annulment of election results and resignation of Putin (Park, 2014).

Within a week, the word about protests had spread across many big Russian cities. A much larger demonstration took place on the 10th December, gathering between 50,000 and 60,000 participants (Greene, 2014). In addition to the demands of earlier protests, the dissenters called for the release of political and economic prisoners (including Navalny and Udaltsov, who were arrested on the 5th of December) and the resignation of the infamous head of the Central election committee Vladimir Churov. In other major Russian cities, smaller but still relatively well-attended demonstrations took place. In Moscow, the core of oppositional activists formed the coordination group called the Protest Action Organising Committee (*Orgkomitet protestnykh deistvii*) (Greene, 2013). The Committee announced that the date for the next Moscow rally was set for the end of December.

On the 24th December 2011, Moscow witnessed one of the largest protests of the Putin era. It was held at the Academician Sakharov Avenue in Moscow, with the Ministry of Internal Affairs counting 29,000 people, while the independent *Novaya Gazeta* newspaper estimated it to be around 100,000 and the organisers of the protest talked about 120,000 (Novaya Gazeta, 2011). The makeup of protesters was similar to the earlier December demonstrations but larger, including liberals and nationalists, members of the feminist and LGBT movements, environmentalist and automobile activists; most importantly, however, it included a great number of people who were not affiliated with any movement and many of whom reportedly went to the streets for the first time (Volkov, 2012b). Another major protest took place in Moscow and other cities on February 4th, amounting to some 100,000 people in the capital (Greene, 2014).

On March 4th 2012, Vladimir Putin was elected as the president of the Russian Federation. While there were reports of electoral fraud by the observers, it was estimated

that Putin would have won over 50% support in any case (Magun, 2014). Technically, it was Putin's third term; because of the earlier change in the Constitution that extended the term of the Russian presidency from four to six years, Putin could now legitimately serve for 12 more years, given that he would be elected for the fourth term as well. The protest the next day in Moscow brought an estimated 20,000 people, which was much smaller than the December protests; the subsequent protest against Putin's presidency on the 10th March had a similar turnout (Park, 2014).

A number of smaller local protests were recorded after that, until, on the 6th May, the infamous March of the Millions took place. The estimated number of the participants differed again, with the Ministry of Internal Affairs counting 8,000 people and various representatives of the opposition bringing this number up to 30 and even to 100 thousand (Park, 2014). A peaceful march from Kaluzhskaya Square to Bolotnaya Square became violent when protesters ran into the riot police cordon. In the ensuing clashes, both protesters and the police were injured (the former much more severely) and hundreds of people arrested (Fomina, 2012). Later, some 30 criminal cases were opened against the protesters who were accused of active involvement in mass riots. According to the independent media channel Dozhd', several people received suspended sentences, but the majority of protesters arrested went to jail for up to four and a half years; a number of cases still continue in 2016 (Dozhd', 2016).

The last large-scale anti-government rally was held in Moscow in June 2012 (Magun, 2014). According to the organisers, the demonstration brought together more than 100,000 people (Park, 2014), with police confirming up to 20,000 participants. The demonstration ended peacefully. After June, there was a number of notable, but much smaller protests, for example the late December 2012 demonstration on Sakharov Square in Moscow that ended in arrests of several oppositional leaders, including Navalny. Another event took place in January 2013: the so-called March Against the Scoundrels, where around 20,000 people protested against the Anti-Magnitsky law, a bill that banned the adoption of Russian children by citizens of the United States. On the 6th May 2013, a year after the controversial March of the Millions demonstration ended in riots and arrests, a commemoration rally was held in Moscow, with professionals estimating the numbers

to be somewhere between 20 and 30 thousand (Blinkin, 2013). After the speeches by the opposition leaders including Nemtsov, Navalny and the former Prime Minister of Russia Mikhail Kasyanov, the demonstration ended peacefully.

It has been argued that no organised movement or political party had emerged from the 2011-2013 wave of protests (Gel'man, 2015; Magun, 2014). In October 2012, a Coordination Council of the Opposition was elected via the Internet, with more than 80,000 people participating in the online voting (Sakwa, 2014). Forty-five elected members of the Council were spread between the four fractions: civic, left, liberal and nationalist. Some researchers noted that the role of this organisation was not clear from the beginning, and it did not manage to fulfil the expectations of protesters and produce an integrated political programme of the opposition movement (Sakwa, 2014; Savelyeva, 2013). In October 2013 the Council was dissolved.

To summarise, this section demonstrates that there were repeated displays of public contention during 2011-2012. While the protest events such as street demonstrations and rallies were often organised by long-standing political activists, the majority of the people who came to those events were politically unaffiliated and new to protest (Greene, 2013). This specific 'grassroots' nature of the 2011-2012 wave of contention posed an intriguing question for the researchers: why, in the absence of established protest organisations, with the lack of influential allies and with little previous experience of active civic engagement, did the large-scale popular mobilisation nonetheless took place? In the following section, I discuss various answers to this question presented in the literature.

2. Perspectives on protest mobilisation in Russia

As I noted in the introduction to this chapter, the majority of academic studies of the 2011-2012 protest cycle in Russia focus on the reasons for popular protest mobilisation. While it might have appeared to an uninformed observer that the mass protests of December 2011 were largely spontaneous responses to election fraud, the scholars of Russian contentious politics agree that these protests had causes that went beyond

electoral falsification (Gel'man, 2015; Jensen, 2013; Ross, 2015c). There is, however, little consensus in the literature regarding why December 2011 mobilised so many people, when previous electoral falsifications had not done so. The next three sections provide a review of the dominant arguments. Taking into consideration the sheer amount of research on Russian protest from various disciplines, especially from 2011 onward, I needed a way to organise the literature so that it provides comprehensive but at the same time focused background for my own research. Through comparing the studies on the basis of their reasoning, methods, and what they envisioned to be the main factor(s) for protest mobilisation, I identified three broad approaches. The first, 'systemic' approach, concentrates on the role of political structures and broad social issues within Russian society. Second, a 'class' approach is built around the idea of the emerging middle class as the main driving force behind the protests. The third, 'psychological' approach, strives to uncover individual and shared motives for protest participation, paying particular attention to the role of various grievances. The labels for approaches are my own; to the best of my knowledge, there have been no previous academic attempts to categorise the literature on the Russian protest.

Systemic approach to protest

One set of explanations as to how and why people became involved in mass protests in 2011-2012 focuses on the effect of broad systemic factors, such as state-citizen relations, structures and opportunities of the Putin regime and the nature of the Russian civil society. The systemic approach is adopted by a number of political scientists and historians, especially by the scholars who are interested in identifying mechanisms of protest across time and exploring its patterns in order to predict the development of contentious behaviour in the future.

Among the first researchers to explore popular mobilisation in Russia through the prism of structural factors were Koesel and Bunce (2012). Arguing from the position of historical institutionalism, they suggested that in 2011, Russian civil society became 'ripe' for large-scale mobilisation as a consequence of earlier rounds of contestation with the

regime. In particular, three factors contributed to it: first, declining public support for Putin's regime, exacerbated by the Putin-Medvedev *rokirovka*; second, the growing vulnerability of the regime, in the sense that it was failing to maintain its appearance of invincibility; and third, the decrease in the number of obstacles to overt contentious behaviour and consequent expansion of political opportunity structures (Tarrow, 1998). With regard to the third point, Koesel and Bunce noted that continuous large-scale protest became possible because earlier anti-regime protests were not suppressed in a violent way. In particular, mass rallies and marches were allowed, police did not use excessive force to suppress them, and on the whole relatively few people were arrested. Because of this, people felt less scared to take to the streets (especially the older generation who remembered the Soviet government response to open protest), which allowed non-systemic opposition to mobilise large popular support.

Similarly, Robertson (2011; 2013), one of the leading authorities on contentious behaviour in Russia, argued that in order to understand the causes of mass mobilisation, it is necessary to understand the broader context in which the protest cycle of 2011-2012 took place. Robertson suggested that political protest in Russia takes place in what he called a 'hybrid regime': a regime that mixes elements of competition into a predominantly authoritarian framework of governance. As a result, hybrid regimes are neither authoritarian nor democratic; they occupy a political grey zone between the two extremes. Robertson proposed that Russian hybrid regime gave way to 'hybrid protests' combining democratic and authoritarian elements, with dissent being organised, open and often symbolic, and at the same time unstructured, spontaneous and direct.

Robertson thus highlighted the difficulty of identifying straightforward causes for 'hybrid protests'. He disagreed with the observers who portrayed the 2011 demonstrations as the sign of final 'awakening' of the Russian civic society in response to state misconduct. Instead, Robertson observed that since election falsification is an often-seen reality of a hybrid regime, Russians were used to it and therefore it could not be the sole reason for mobilisation. Rather, citizens mobilised because they saw authority's wrongdoings through the prism of a civil rights framework, which had been gradually developing alongside Putin's political authoritarianism. Specifically, Robertson suggested

that the protests of the latter half of the 2000s prepared the ground for the mass protests of 2011-2012, in that they promoted the emergence of cohesive civic opposition to the state: ‘the experience of January [2005] consequently forged a new sense of solidarity and tolerance among different factions of the opposition and a new understanding of the need for unity in the face of the regime’ (2011, p. 184). The events of 2005 elevated prestige of symbolic dissent, and demonstrated that open street protest was a worthwhile form of political participation. At the same time, dwellers in the big cities like Moscow and Saint Petersburg, became accustomed to witnessing (and often participating in) demonstrations, which prompted large-scale popular mobilisation in December 2011. These three factors together — increased legitimacy of symbolic display of dissent, public solidarity over certain civil issues and the growing dissatisfaction with the general political situation in the country — were the reasons why so many people took to the streets in 2011. Nonetheless, Robertson warned against assuming that there was a political movement in Russia, simply because there was a number of large-scale protests calling for political reforms. On this point, he highlighted the importance of continuous empirical investigation: ‘even in the case of quite large-scale and widespread protests [...] whether a protest wave constitutes a movement is an empirical question and cannot be simply assumed’ (p. 207).

Addressing Robertson’s call for more empirical research, Volkov (2012a) drew on large sets of survey data and a number of in-depth interviews with protesters to examine the ‘infrastructure’ of 2011-2012 protests and identify the factors that influenced mobilisation. Discussing the set of ‘objective’ factors (I review his discussion of more ‘subjective’ findings in ‘Psychological approach’ section) Volkov pointed to the role played by the economic recession that started in Russia in 2008 in providing the grounds for popular dissatisfaction. He also linked mobilisation to the instability of the political system, in particular to the rapid decline of the authority of the president Dmitry Medvedev and a series of pre-election scandals mainly connected to the Just Russia party. In addition, Volkov highlighted the role of the various organisations that helped to publicise and channel mass protests, such as The Workshop of Protest Actions, a civil organisation that brought together people who were willing to organise protest events, and

Citizen Observer, a project created by the Solidarity political party that aimed to record and control election falsifications.

In turn, Gel'man (2015) discussed two more interrelated structural factors: the contradictory agenda of Medvedev's presidency and a shift in the opposition's political strategy. He suggested that while the course of 'modernisation', initiated during Medvedev's presidency, was inefficient and flawed, it had put a number of legal and human rights issues on the political agenda and (perhaps unintentionally) promoted a more open dialogue between the public and the authorities. This allowed more room for civic initiatives, which resulted in the politicisation of Russian society and the creation of a number of independent protest movements, such as the Society of Blue Buckets (*Obshchestvo sinikh vedyorok*, the movement against the abuse of traffic laws by civil servants) and the Defenders of the Khimki forest (*Dvizhenie v zashchitu Khimkinskogo lesa*, local environmental movement). Rapid growth of civic movements coincided with the 'coming of age' of the younger leaders of the opposition such as Alexei Navalny and Evgeniya Chirikova. Representatives of the younger oppositional generation were adept at communicating with the public through social media and the Internet, and hence became more likely to win the support of the wider masses, compared with the older opposition leaders like Boris Nemtsov or Mikhail Kasyanov. In particular, younger oppositional activists were instrumental for uniting people around the populist notion of negative consensus against the authoritarian regime. Gel'man argued that in the late 2010s, non-systemic opposition chose to abandon an abstract course on 'democracy' or 'liberalisation' and focused instead on concrete faults of the regime, such as widespread corruption and arbitrariness of law. Because of the great relevance of such issues, especially given the deteriorating economic situation due to the global financial crisis (Chaisty & Whitefield, 2012), such a strategic shift provided solid grounds for the cooperation of various dissent groups in the demand for political change. Gel'man suggested that in December 2011 these two factors reinforced each other: when Putin announced his return to the presidency, a large number of dissatisfied Russian citizens 'naturally' gravitated towards a considerably rejuvenated, populist and hence more attractive non-systemic opposition.

Further research by Russian protest scholars paid more attention to the role of such systemic factors as the state-society relations and the opposition's strategic actions. For example, Greene (2013), in an attempt to answer why a viable mass protest movement emerged in 2011, suggested that it was mainly due to the non-systemic opposition's ability to strengthen the ties between various protest groups. According to him, the opposition managed to put forward an idea that seemingly local grievances, be it the demolition of a park or the impossibility of starting a small business, stem from a universal injustice of state (mis)conduct. Such 'bridging of frames' (p. 50), Greene argued, was what had brought activists and people affected by it together in an attempt to make the regime change its ways. Evans (2012) put forward a similar idea in his study of mobilisation strategies used by the Defenders of the Khimki forest, a group opposing the construction of a highway through a forest near Moscow. He found that activists of the movement achieved wide public support by skilfully blending more abstract political principles, such as justice for everyone, with everyday concerns grounded in self-interest.

In a related study, Greene (2014) developed this theory by adding another factor into it. He suggested that the pattern of collective behaviour in Russia depended not just on the rhetoric of the opposition, but also on the nature of interaction between the state and its citizens: people mobilised when the state intervened directly into their lives and, importantly, afflicted them as a group. Drawing on the analysis of three protest case studies — a human rights protest organised by the NGO Public Verdict (*Obshchestvennyi Verdikt*), housing rights protests in Moscow and protests by Russian motorists — Greene argued that in the first two cases the movements failed to mobilise enough people and press their demands because the state did not recognise protesters as a legitimate group. The motorists' movement, however, was much more lengthy and successful because the state responded to them as a group, hence providing the tools for the protesters to consolidate into an integrated collective movement.

In line with Greene's earlier work, a study by White (2015) emphasised the role the dynamics between the state and the civil society played in the development of large-scale protests. He suggested that participants of largely economic movements of the latter half of the 2000s became politicised when in the course of fighting they had to deal with

resistance from the authorities. White gives an example of protests in the city of Kaliningrad in 2010, where a number of large-scale demonstrations were triggered by increase in taxation. When the authorities failed to address the economic demands promptly, the campaign turned political and called for the dismissal of Kaliningrad's governor as well as his perceived patron, Vladimir Putin. Therefore, White argued that by 2011 the civil society was more likely to embrace political slogans, as a 'collaborative civil-political society relationship' (p. 319) was already in place. From its side, the opposition was prepared to capitalise on widespread public discontent and channel it against the authoritarian regime. Due to such interlacement, the borders between the political and the civil became blurred, enabling the non-systemic opposition movement to reach unprecedented popular support.

Studies taking a systemic approach to popular protest mobilisation in Russia thus offer a number of fruitful academic insights into the process of emergence of the protest movement; they also highlight the importance of paying attention to wider cultural and socio-political contexts while attempting to understand Russian protest. However, these studies are limited in their ability to address the social dimension of mobilisation, because they largely see people as subjects to existing infrastructural powers rather than active agents creating the change. Greene (2014, p. 226) acknowledges this when he writes about the importance of understanding anti-authoritarian social movements 'as a lived social experience rather than as an aggregation of macro-level conditions and structures'. The next section reviews studies that take a slightly more focused approach, in that they see a specific factor, social class belonging, as the main force behind mobilisation.

Class approach to protest

Many writers turned to demographic factors, particularly the role of class, in order to explain the 2011-2012 protest wave in Russia. Discussing the effect of class inequality on protest movement, Busygina and Filippov (2015) argued that it was the members of the affluent Russian middle class who were the main driving force behind protests, as they were prepared to take the risks associated with open dissent. On the other hand, poorer

citizens perceived protests as too costly and detrimental for the economic situation, and avoided becoming involved. Supporting this idea is a comprehensive survey-based review by de Vogel (2013), who demonstrated that the overwhelming majority of 2011-2012 political protesters were identified as being from the 'middle class'. Drawing on that, de Vogel suggested that people from the emergent urban middle class came to share certain grievances, among which were concerns with corruption and bribery among the authorities, growing poverty in a majority of the population and limitation of civil rights and democratic freedoms. The state's inability to address these grievances led to escalation of tension, which resulted in large-scale protests across the country. Interestingly, de Vogel also provided evidence indicating that democratic concerns, although expressed more strongly by the members of the professional middle class, were not limited to it but shared across the population, thus countering the idea that *only* the members of the Russian middle class were politically aggrieved. Along similar lines, Dmitriev (2015) pointed to the increasingly cross-class nature of protest. He suggested that mainly 'economic' protesters from the working class and provinces teamed up with mainly 'political' protesters from the urban middle class in the quest for justice, creating the basis for large-scale social mobilisation.

Gontmakher and Ross (2015) focused specifically on whether the protests of 2011-2012 were a 'revolt of the middle classes'. Exploring whether people who identify as the middle class would show greater levels of oppositional activity, they came to an interesting conclusion. While, indeed, support from the younger members of the middle class greatly assisted the protest movement, putting the middle class at the forefront of the anti-regime dissent, their survey-led analysis demonstrated that a large proportion of the middle class also supported a thesis that Russia needs a 'strong hand' to govern it and condemned protests. Gontmakher and Ross located the reason for such a paradox in the composition of the middle class in Russia. Specifically, drawing on earlier studies, they demonstrated that about 50% of the middle class in Russia are governmental employees who depend on the State for their livelihood and hence consistently give support to Putin's United Russia party; moreover, these people tend to value certainty over reforms and fear the instability that mass-scale protest might bring (see also Makarenko, 2010). Therefore,

even though they are seen as ‘middle class’, these people do not in fact support anti-governmental protest. This finding allowed Gontmakher and Ross to suggest that belonging to the middle class was not in itself the main reason why people took to the streets; rather, it depended on the more concrete factors, such as people’s reliance on the state and their consequential preference for stability vs reform.

In a related study, Ross (2015b) offered survey data to reinforce the point that middle class support for protest was not ubiquitous. He demonstrated that the members of the middle class who were state-dependent exhibited strong support for the United Russia party and the Putin regime. Another anti-protest ‘middle class’ was comprised of the members of the military and security sectors. At the same time, members of the so-called ‘creative’ professions, small business owners and entrepreneurs, who also can be termed ‘middle class’, came to be largely dissatisfied with the self-enriching tactics of the regime. Without disputing the ‘class’ protest explanation, Ross thus demonstrated the importance of more detailed analysis of the various social groups that are often unproblematically included under the umbrella of the ‘middle class’.

In a similar vein, while arguing that the middle class in Russia played an important role in protest mobilisation, Peregudov (2012) pointed to the two sets of obstacles to its mobilising power. First, the fact that the middle class in Russia was in the minority. Indeed, several major surveys suggested that no more than 20 percent of the population could be classified as middle class on the basis of education, occupation and material wellbeing (Remington, 2011). Second, Peregudov (2012) pointed to the issue of motivation: he argued that the composition of Russian middle class is such that its most influential part are members of the bureaucracy and public servants, who prioritise accumulation of personal wealth over democratic freedoms and are hence not very motivated to foster liberal changes. Such potential lack of incentive and minority character raised serious questions regarding the potential of the middle class to foster political change by mobilising and, most importantly, sustaining protests. Peregudov concluded his study with an interesting idea that the driving force behind protest could be the people who *consider* themselves to be middle class, but who do not necessarily ‘fit’ into its sociological

description; because of that, he suggested that future research needs to take into account people's self-identifications.

By conceptualising the protest wave in Russia as a conflict between various social classes, the studies reviewed above provide credible answers to the question of why popular protest started to gain momentum at the end of 2011. 'Class' approach studies also seem to be more attentive to the role of the people than 'systemic' approach research. However, the authors here envision people as a unified collective with shared grievances, which leaves the critical question of individual understandings unanswered. Indeed, it has been argued that in protest participants are guided by a 'subjective sense of disadvantage' that does not directly map onto material structures or wider 'class' grievances (van Zomeren, Postmes & Spears, 2008, p. 505). Studies that conceptualise protest solely in terms of a class struggle hence run into danger of glossing over important nuances of protest behaviour, including people's own interpretations of who they are and what they are fighting against. In contrast, the third group of authors, who zoom in on the psychology behind protest mobilisation, provide more room for the subjective discourse of protesters themselves.

Psychological approach to protest

Several scholars sought to explain Russian protests by focusing on psychological determinants of mobilisation. While it has been argued that the social psychology of protest might offer a distinctly fruitful avenue for the study of contentious behaviour in Russia (Agadullina, 2013; Agadullina & Lovakov, 2013), it is noteworthy that specifically social psychological research on the protest cycle of 2011-2012 to date remains limited. In-depth search among Russia's largest academic psychology journals, including The Moscow University Psychology Herald (*Vestnik Moskovskogo Universiteta. Seriya 14. Psikhologiya*), The World of Psychology (*Mir Psikhologii*), Modern Research of Social Problems (*Sovremennye Issledovaniya Sotsialnykh Problem*) and Social Psychology and Society (*Sotsial'naya Psikhologiya i Obshchestvo*) yielded only a handful of works orienting towards the importance of the socio-psychological determinants of protests

(Agadullina, 2013; Agadullina & Lovakov, 2013; Savchenko, 2012). However, these are mostly theoretical studies and none of them makes use of contemporary socio-psychological theories of collective action. Thus, in this section I also review the work by sociologists and political scientists who touched on psychological factors of mobilisation.

Most recently, Hagemann and Kufenko (2016) used a statistical approach to identify key determinants of protests in Russia during 2011-2012. Part of their work is dedicated to the analysis of socio-psychological factors. The authors found evidence to suggest that people who took part in protests were motivated by a set of shared grievances, including the issues of inequality, economic injustices and dissatisfaction with the election results. Hagemann and Kufenko traced the development of these grievances to people's concerns with the economy: in particular, they suggested that the growing income gap resulted in developments of personal grievances and the feeling of relative deprivation. Survey-based research by Volkov (2012c) supported this idea. Volkov pointed out that one of the main reasons why the protests of 2011 gathered strong popular support was the state's failure to address a number of generic political and economic grievances that had been developing during Putin's time in office. Unresolved, dissatisfaction built up and resulted in civic mass mobilisation. As part of a related study, Volkov (2012a) tried to go deeper into examination of subjective causes of protest. He found that personal emotions, such as uncertainty regarding economic prospects and indignation over state corruption, played an important role in transforming grievances into active protest. For many, negative emotions were strengthened during the December 2011 election observation (see also Berlyand & Stupakova, 2012). Volkov thus suggested that the subjective feeling of uncertainty was the most important psychological factor in the consolidation of the protest activity.

Along similar lines, Shestopal (2012) investigated the psychological aspects of a 'protester mindset' in Russia. He suggested that from 2010 onward Russian citizens *en masse* became more concerned with the issue of governmental accountability and became more familiar with liberal political framework. Positive attitudes to democracy and the perceived importance of state responsibility coincided with the rise of individualistic tendencies, resulting in a shared desire for a strong, wealthy and, importantly, democratic

state, where one would have opportunities for personal development. At the same time, the importance of stability, which was prominent in the mid-2000s, started to decline. Shestopal suggested that many members of the younger generations, who were ready to embrace a more open liberal state, experienced cognitive dissonance over the mismatch between Medvedev's liberalisation rhetoric and what they had witnessed during the election cycle of 2011. Such dissonance resulted in the creation of 'dissatisfied ethical identity', which fostered large-scale demonstrations in pursuit of social and moral justice. Shestopal therefore proposed that the 2011-2012 collective movement was not triggered by some generic political issue people had with Putin and the state authorities, but rather by popular dismay over the state's moral degradation.

A similar point was made by Selivanova and Goncharov (2013). Drawing on qualitative analyses of interviews with the members of Saint Petersburg's Election Observers movement, they came up with a moral 'archetype' of an active observer. Selivanova and Goncharov suggested that their respondents shared a heightened expectation regarding the responsibility of the authorities. Witnessing the breach of such expectations provoked feelings of moral indignation and betrayal, which in turn fostered the desire to express such feelings in open protest. The participants also reportedly shared self-perceptions as 'citizens', which for many entailed having an ethical obligation to actively fight for a desired political change. The nexus of personal 'citizenry' responsibility and moral indignation over witnessed misconduct provided the motivation for active protest involvement. Interestingly however, Selivanova and Goncharov did not find significant evidence of a similar shared identity among the activists of the broader movement for Fair Elections, who they interviewed in their pilot project, suggesting that no collective identity was formed.

In contrast to the suggestion that collective identity was not formed in post-2011 protests, Smyth et al. (2015, p. 52) argued that participation in 2011-2012 protests was 'built on a collective interpretation of political life, or common frame, which transformed shared grievances to political action'. Using factor analysis on their survey and focus group data regarding the motivations for taking part in street protests, Smyth and colleagues showed that anti-Putin protesters were driven by a number of distinct

grievances of a political and personal nature that, according to the researchers, formed a distinct protester identity. In terms of political grievances, the main factor identified was regime support, which was characterised by the two common grievances: disdain for the December 2011 electoral falsification and concern that the country was moving in the wrong political direction. Here, the core reported grievances were related to state corruption, inadequacy of the justice and electoral systems and the crisis of leadership. Corruption was named as the main problem in Russia. Smyth et al. specifically pointed out that corruption was considered as a political rather than economic grievance: as the authors wrote, ‘for most protest participants, economic concerns were subordinate to broader political concerns’ (p. 64). In terms of personal motivations, Smyth and colleagues observed a set of factors that included the need to defend one’s human rights and dignity, desire to contribute to Russia’s historic development and the need to fulfil one’s moral duty through an open expression of concern. Another factor that emerged was strong emotional investment in being active associated with commitment to fellow protesters, a set of traits that Smyth and colleagues called ‘civic duty’. According to the authors, it was a combination of shared political grievances and the ‘civic duty’ factors that motivated Russian citizens to join protests.

Other researchers focused specifically on political perceptions of younger protesters (Savchenko, 2012; Zhelnina, 2013): they found that lack of trust in the government played an important role in mobilisation among the younger educated Russians. Furthermore, Zhelnina (2013) investigated a particular psychological aspect of youth protest activism: protesters’ own understanding of the nature of their dissent. After conducting a qualitative exploration of young people’s attitudes to politics and protest, Zhelnina found that many people conceptualised their activism in terms of civic, rather than political, activity. ‘Political’ was generally understood in the context of formal political activities and organisations and seen as an alien and overly-formal domain, even though many participants admitted being interested in the political situation in the country. The study stressed that many respondents actively avoided being seen as driven by ‘political’ motives and portrayed their protest participation as a result of freedom of choice and as a self-fulfilment strategy. Zhelnina thus concluded that younger protesters in Russia

were not as ‘political’ as some researchers tended to suggest. Overall, her study demonstrated the importance of paying attention to people’s own self-categorisations through an empirical analysis of protesters’ talk.

Elsewhere, Magun (2014) conducted discursive research into the various facets of protester self-categorisations and their potential role in the sudden mobilisation of the previously passive citizens in December 2011. Drawing on the analysis of two hundred short semi-structured interviews with protesters during demonstrations in Moscow and Saint Petersburg, Magun found two frequent self-categorisations. First, when protesters were directly asked whether they would consider themselves to be members of a particular social group or class, many replied that they would identify as part of the ‘middle’ or ‘creative’ class. Second, in response to the same question and more spontaneously in the course of the interview, a sizable number of dissenters argued that they represented ‘the people’ (*narod*). Magun focused specifically on the latter label because of its somewhat contradictory nature: it objectively lays claim to being a majority, while those who protested were clearly a minority. Furthermore, ‘the people’ in Russia tends to have a strong reference to the less educated rural and predominantly working class population, but it was employed by those who were relatively well-off, urban and educated (based on the demographic information gathered). Discussing these contradictions, Magun suggested there was evidence of a shared collective protester identity in Russia that was predominantly ‘populist’ and functioned to mobilise as many people as possible. In particular, by calling themselves ‘the people’, protesters asserted their status as ‘ordinary’ common people, thereby erasing political divides between the heterogeneous social masses and sending a rhetorically persuasive message to the apolitical majority to join them in a struggle against the state. The inclusiveness and strategic power of such message, according to Magun, resulted in it being picked up by many, which led to proliferation of protests across Russia.

Finally, a recent study by Clément (2015) provided an interesting addition to the psychological portrait of a ‘lay’ protester in Russia. The study adopted a somewhat unique micro-level approach to investigating how Russians who had no inclination towards

political activism might acquire motivation to become involved in collective action. Clément argued that traditional social-movement literature is limited in that it:

postulates, rather than problematises, the existence of communities, networks and resources available for mobilisation, and a political culture that values active citizenship. The literature mainly focuses on organised, contentious endeavours and infrequently analyses the types of mobilisation that are the object of this paper: ones that involve people without previous experience in activism. (p. 212).

The criticism about the lack of academic attention devoted to more ‘ordinary’ protesters is especially acute given that, in post-Soviet Russian society the conditions for organised political activism are still largely unfavourable. It has been noted that there are virtually no institutional structures of oppositional mobilisation such as real oppositional parties or organised movements in Russia (Bikbov, 2012). Hence, it is sensible to assume that the majority of protest participants in Russia have little personal experience of political activism and are likely not to be embedded in organised protest networks. Because of that, traditional mobilisation models that focus on the role of political activism and organisational enrolment might not be able to provide good explanations for contentious behaviour in Russia. In order to address these limitations, Clément focused on local practices of developing political attitudes among the people, using frame analysis inspired by Erving Goffman. In her work, she reported the results of two ethnographic case-studies: the housing self-management movement in the town of Astrakhan in 2009 and the strike movement at the car plant near Saint Petersburg in 2008. While she did not directly analyse the protests of 2011-2012, Clément offered valuable insights into the psychological mechanisms of people’s mobilisation.

In particular, her analysis of the two case studies suggested that popular mobilisation takes place when people develop a specific social outlook in the face of a tangible threat that directly impacts their personal lives. Exploring this further, Clément turned to the concept of ‘reframing’, which she describes as a process through which deeply rooted attitudes and patterns of behaviour are transformed. She suggested that popular mobilisation in the two observed movements resulted from a number of reframing processes. First, a certain structural change took place, specifically worsening of the living

conditions in the housing movement and growing inefficiency of the trade union in the car plant movement. Then, affected people started to discuss these issues in informal, emotionally charged conversations. Such conversations in turn produced and grounded the narratives of ‘us’ versus ‘them’, and contributed to the development of a sense of collective belonging and solidarity. In effect, previously apolitical and ‘ordinary’ citizens came to develop a sense of shared identity, characterised by an increased attachment and loyalty to the members of their own group — inhabitants of the house or plant workers — and growing distrust and anger towards the authorities opposing grassroots mobilisation. Consequently, individuals went through a shift of frames: from an apolitical frame to a new ‘activist’ frame, under which overt political mobilisation became common and accepted behaviour.

To summarise, studies of psychological factors of mobilisation show that people’s perceptions, attitudes and identities have an impact on their protest behaviour. In particular, the research reviewed above points to the important role that moral and emotional indignation played in galvanising a previously passive Russian citizenry in December 2011. However, there is certain ambiguity in the literature regarding the extent to which it is possible to identify the set of shared grievances and identities responsible for the 2011-2012 protest cycle. As Chebankova (2015) notices, recent protests in Russia were characterised by epistemological uncertainty, value pluralism and the lack of political consensus, which in turn grounds the need for in-depth empirical investigation of the variety of subjective ideas and values around which the protest movement consolidated.

Considering the growing evidence that psychological factors are important for popular mobilisation, the lack of academic interest from the discipline of social psychology in studying protest in Russia is somewhat remarkable. To the best of my knowledge, no major study of 2011-2012 protests so far has attempted to explore contentious events in Russia from the standpoint of contemporary socio-psychological theories of collective action. Yet, it has been argued that social psychology offers a unique perspective on protest due to its ability to bridge psychological and structural variables; its focus on individuals as social agents is essential with respect to questions about why some people become involved in protests while others do not, and why people mobilise at

certain times (van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2013). These are precisely the questions that scholars of the Russian protest are eager to explore (Ross, 2015a). In other words, a social psychological framework might offer a number of invaluable insights and advance the knowledge on collective behaviour from the perspective of movement participants. Thus in the following four sections I will give a review of the relevant approaches to the study of collective behaviour within social psychology.

3. The social psychology of protest

Collective behaviour is a complex phenomenon that is used to describe a wide range of activities, and has been studied from a variety of different angles. Political scientists, historians and sociologists traditionally took an interest in the topic of collective behaviour. Many of them, however, tended to disregard the psychological side of such behaviour, focusing attention instead on structural bases, such as mobilisation of resources or availability of political opportunities (Hunt & Benford, 1993). Yet, some scholars maintained that symbolic ‘identity politics’ lie at the heart of contentious behaviour. Among the first advocates of attending to subjective meanings in research on protest, Melucci (1989) pointed to the problem of political reductionism — the danger of reducing all collective actions to their political goals — and proposed that exploration of the psychological dimensions of protest behaviour was a way to overcome it and create a more balanced understanding of popular dissent. Likewise, Gamson (1992) observed that the processes involved in collective action are essentially psychological in nature, and emphasised the need for political and cultural explanations of protest to be complemented by a social psychological analysis. Along similar lines, Klandermans (1997) suggested that since social movements are comprised of individuals, individual level of analysis is of paramount importance and cannot be ignored.

The contemporary social psychology of contentious behaviour starts with the simple, but key assumption that people should be motivated to participate in social protest. Mobilisation has been thus described as ‘the most central process in contentious politics’ (Tilly & Tarrow, 2007, p. 89). Indeed, it is safe to assume that protesting is not something

the majority of people do on a daily basis; contentious behaviour involves risks, and hence requires at least some reason to become involved.

The traditional sociological view posits that mobilisation starts with some state of disadvantage, when people experience objective grievances and take to the streets to voice and amend them (Buechler, 2011). Later, however, scholars of protest observed that not all aggrieved people mobilise, and not all mobilised people seem to be aggrieved (Melucci, 1996). This observation led to another suggestion: that it is not so much *objective* grievances as *subjective* senses of discontent that propel social protest. In other words, people become protesters when they develop an understanding that the situation they are in is unjust and must be changed. Contemporary social psychology follows this view and positions subjective grievances ‘at the heart of every protest’ (van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2013, p. 888).

Klandermans (1997), drawing inspiration from Henri Tajfel’s theory of intergroup relations (1978), suggested that subjective feelings of injustice arise from one of three main sources: perception of illegitimate inequality, suddenly imposed grievance, or perceived violation of moral principles. The first kind of grievance is experienced when two conditions are fulfilled. First, people should understand the situation as in some way disadvantaged; second and more importantly, they should see such disadvantage as unfair. The former without the latter — when disadvantage is perceived but accepted as normal — would not, according to Klandermans, facilitate collective action. For example, while some people in Russia can be dissatisfied with the political situation in the country, they might perceive it as something that is ‘normal’ or something they deserve, and thus abstain from involvement in active protest. On the other hand, those who are equally dissatisfied but perceive the situation as unfair would be more likely to become protesters.

The second source — suddenly imposed grievance — draws on the idea of an unexpected threat or danger that unites people around the perceived feeling of victimhood. Klandermans cites the work of Walsh (1988), who studied protests in response to the Three Mile Island accident. Walsh suggested that partial nuclear meltdown created a powerful grievance cause that led people to become involved in anti-nuclear protests. With respect to the Russian context, a potential example is the mass protests of December

2011, that took place immediately after the Parliamentary elections, which were perceived to have been rigged.

The third kind of grievance orients to the important role played by shared values in mobilising people to protest. When people share a value consensus, they become dissatisfied when the situation is perceived to violate such consensus. For instance, as people came to see the segregation between white and black people as unwarrantable, more and more protests started to take place in South Africa (Durrheim & Dixon, 2005). Moral indignation over violated principles can thus be a very powerful source of protest. Applying this idea to Russia, recall for example the argument made by Gontmakher and Ross (2015), that the emergence of the new middle class fostered the development and internalisation of democratic values, such as freedom of speech and political competition. Following this claim, recent anti-governmental protests in Russia can be seen as the protests of the middle class against the violation of democratic principles that people came to share and perceive as legitimate.

It is important to remember that the social psychological framework suggests that all these grievances are not objectively given, in the sense that they exist for everyone in reality; rather, they are subjective perceptions. In addition, it has been argued that grievances are not the only factors behind protest involvement. Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans (2013) undertook a detailed review of studies exploring the reasons why people become protesters. Based on the review, they put forward five broad factors that predict protest participation: grievances, emotions, social embeddedness, efficacy and identity. The researchers also argued that while these components can analytically be discussed separately, in reality they are closely interwoven. Various models have been proposed in an attempt to synthesise these elements into a coherent and full picture of what is happening ‘on the ground’.

One of the most recent attempts at comprehensive summary has been made by van Zomeren et al. (2008), who identified three broad socio-psychological perspectives on social protest. They argued that building on subjective determinants, social psychologists could view social protest through the lens of perceived injustice, perceived efficacy or social identity. The first approach builds on the theory of relative deprivation in exploring

subjective experiences of grievances. Research evidence within this perspective suggests that perceptions of injustice develop in an intergroup context, when people see themselves as representatives of deprived groups and experience subjective feelings of deprivation on behalf of such groups (Smith & Ortiz, 2002).

In line with this proposition, Postmes, Branscombe, Spears and Young (1999) found experimental evidence suggesting that interpersonal disadvantage-related comparison is a much weaker predictor of collective action than intergroup comparison. Their study suggests that protesters are not the ones who are the most deprived personally, but those who see their group as the most discriminated against. To summarise, the relative deprivation approach predicts that subjective perception of collective injustice will mobilise people to take part in social protest.

The concept of relevant deprivation as the main driving force of protest was criticised by the advocates of the resource mobilisation approach (Buechler, 2011). The latter theory drew attention to the fact that in the world, injustice is abundant, yet social protest is relatively scarce. In this regard, the dilemma was explained by reference to the scarcity of resources, in particular political institutions and social movement organisations (McCarthy & Zald, 1977). In their seminal article, McCarthy and Zald challenged prior scholarly preoccupation with grievances and offered to focus instead on the interaction between resources, pre-existing socio-political structures and inherently rational and strategic entrepreneurial activities of people. It is worth noting that in its emphasis on structural factors and rationality, resource mobilisation theory also tried to avoid subjective dimensions of protest (Buechler, 2011). So in contrast to relative deprivation theory, which emphasised passionate mobilisation of discontent, resource mobilisation theory focused on rational mobilisation of resources. In social psychology, research structured around resource mobilisation theory constitutes the second broad perspective on social protest (van Zomeren et al., 2008).

Van Zomeren and colleagues stated that social psychologists of this theoretical orientation initially encountered an issue: being concerned with structural predictors of protest, resource mobilisation theory drifted away from subjective considerations of individual protesters. This situation promoted the development of integrative theories that

strived to combine subjective and objective variables. For example, Klandermans (1984) integrated social psychological insights on individual decision-making with sociological expectancy value theory. His overall framework presents the willingness to participate in social protests as a function of subjective cost and benefits calculation. Klandermans applies this understanding to the case of the Industrial Workers' Union failed campaign for shorter work hours that took place in the Netherlands in 1979. The data obtained through interviews and questionnaires with members of the Union suggested that in deciding whether to take part in a protest, people were guided by a rational choice between the perceived costs and benefits of participation. Even if the person agreed that the demands of the protest would relieve the grievance, they would not take part in it if they doubted the efficacy of participation. In other words, the main suggestion here is that people engage in social protest when they, first, believe it will bring about a change, and second, when they expect the benefits to outweigh the risks. The interplay between subjective expectancy and objective behaviour was of particular importance in Klandermans's model: people do act on their subjective expectations, but while 'these expectations need not be real, they are real in their consequences' (p. 598). Following these insights, further research distinguished between individual and group efficacy, arguing that the latter was a much better predictor of collective action (Mummendey, Kessler, Klink & Mielke, 1999). In this regard, people who believed that their in-group was capable of resolving grievances through collective effort were shown to be more easily mobilised.

The final theoretical perspective on collective behaviour outlined by van Zomeren et al. (2008) started to develop in the 1970s with the rise of Social Identity Theory (SIT; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Traditionally, social identity is defined as 'part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership' (Tajfel, 1978, p. 63). This definition holds two important ideas. First, social identities are subjective perceptions: individuals should recognise that they belong to a given group. Second, social identities are important sources of pride and self-esteem. Because of the latter, SIT theorises that people will strive to enhance the positive image of the in-group

they strongly identify with. One way to win prestige is through social competition; that is, through undertaking collective action to fight another group (Tajfel, 1982). Hence, within the social identity approach, social protests are seen as direct expressions of disadvantaged social identity. In that sense, Klandermans's (1997) idea mentioned above is correct only to an extent: social movements are indeed comprised of individuals, but individuals who act as representatives of collectives. Thus, SIT classifies protest as intergroup behaviour (Wright, 2001).

The third approach thus claims that it is social identity that mobilises people to protest (Reicher, 2004). The argument itself is not new — it is rooted in the writings of sociologists who observed the importance of collective identity in protest participation. For example, Melucci (1989) has proposed that all conflicts are ultimately the conflicts of identity, and that the creation of shared identity is among the most important tasks for success of a movement. Social psychologists, however, have taken these insights further in developing and testing concrete models that predict social protest participation based on identification. Over the next two sections, I give an overview of models that treat identity as a product of psychological cognition. The section after that explores studies that treat identities as strategic projects accomplished in interaction.

Explaining protest through social identification — the cognitive approach

Within the social psychology of contention, two interconnected models have largely dominated the field: the dual pathway model of collective behaviour (Simon et al., 1998) and the politicised collective identity model (Simon & Klandermans, 2001). Both of these models build on the basic assumption that the more someone identifies with a group, the higher the chance that they will take part in social protest on behalf of the group. It is worth mentioning that identification here is seen as a cognitive process, measurable and varying in strength. The findings of statistical analyses led researchers to suggest that strong social identification is the most accurate predictor of protest, and it positively influences people's willingness to become involved even if a more rationalist cost and benefits calculation advises against it (Klandermans, 2014).

In this regard, in their seminal study applying the social identity approach to research on collective action, Simon et al. (1998) proposed a dual pathway model of social protest participation. In line with SIT, they suggested that protest is best understood as a collective strategy underpinned by collective identification. Moreover, in line with expectancy-value models (Klandermans, 1984), they predicted that people would be more likely to protest if they could see the value of a protest either for their group (collective motive) or for themselves (reward motive), and that taking part in protest would elicit positive reactions from relevant others (social motive). Overall, the researchers hypothesised that to become involved in a protest people could take two different paths. They could either act on their subjective perceptions of costs and benefits of protest involvement (instrumental pathway), or act on the internalised collective identity (identity pathway). Importantly, they also suggested that strong collective identification would make the largest contribution to the willingness to become involved.

Those hypotheses were tested in two different protest contexts: among the older people's Grey Panthers movement in Germany and among the members of the gay movement in the United States. In both contexts, cost and benefit motives were found to be positively related to the willingness to participate. However, identification with the social movement was found to be a much more significant predictor of the willingness to become engaged in protest than cost/benefit perceptions. Importantly, Simon and colleagues drew attention to the levels of collective identification. They argued that identification with the concrete movement (Grey Panthers or gay movement) was a more salient factor of protest preparedness than identification with the broader social categories (older people or gay people). These findings show that specific activist identity overshadows both the more general collective membership, and the more instrumental reasoning. In the words of Simon et al., 'if I know who I am, then I also know what to do, no matter what the consequences are' (p. 656). The dual pathway model declares that strong identification with the movement in a sense 'forces' people to protest, diminishing the importance of efficacy perception; something that is less likely to happen if the person identifies with the broader social group alone.

Further studies found more experimental support for the identification pathway (de Weerd & Klandermans, 1999; Klandermans, Sabucedo & Rodriguez, 2004; Stürmer & Simon, 2004; Stürmer, Simon, Loewy & Jörger, 2003). For example, the paramount importance of identification with a group was shown in the context of student protests in Germany (Stürmer & Simon, 2009). The study demonstrated that students who were angry about their group predicament also had stronger ties with their social identity; together, the ‘hot’ emotion and high degree of group identification had a positive effect on their willingness to participate in protest.

To summarise, the dual pathway model of social protest identified an important mobilisation mechanism that rests on the adoption of collective group identity. In an attempt to explain this mechanism in detail, Simon and his colleagues turned to the topic of politicisation. More specifically, they proposed that collective group identity has the power to overshadow rational cost and benefit considerations because it is, essentially, a politicised identity (Klandermans, 2014). That is, group members whose identity has been politicised have higher stakes (or at least subjectively feel they have higher stakes), and thus are more willing to become involved in the struggle for power (Simon & Klandermans, 2001).

The second dominating theory, the Politicised Collective Identity model (PCI; Simon & Klandermans, 2001), is concerned with analysing specific components of activist identity. As is the case with the majority of theoretical concepts, the model distinguishes between the three components in theory, but in reality, they often overlap and inform each other. PCI thus functions as an ‘ideal’ theoretical framework that guides the understanding of the complex psychological processes involved in protest mobilisation (van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2013).

PCI model has the same starting point as Simon and his colleagues: that in protest, individuals act as members of social groups. Subsequently, this basic idea was developed by adding the social power dimension. It was suggested that as groups exist within the society, they are often embedded in broader power dynamics (van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2007). As a consequence, groups often become involved in intergroup conflicts over establishing, changing or maintaining power structures (Klandermans,

2014). Based on this, the PCI model sees social protest as a form of such power struggle. With regard to the actors of this struggle, Simon and Klandermans (2001) suggested that typically, protest involves two parties in direct opposition (for example, Dutch farmers against the Ministry of Agriculture officials — see de Weerd & Klandermans, 1999), plus the public. This last actor is of major importance: the researchers argue that the oppositional parties will always battle for control, over favour and acceptance by the general public, which is the source of resources and potential new recruits. Because of this, the actions of antagonists are always contingent not only on the nature of the conflict itself, but also on the broader societal context.

In establishing the steps of politicisation, scholars of PCI theory took into account the previous research on relative deprivation. Specifically, the realisation of collective discontent was suggested as the first milestone on the road to protest (Simon & Klandermans, 2001). With regard to this, it has been argued that certain kinds of deprivation are more powerful in engaging people: for instance, affective deprivation (dissatisfaction, moral indignation) is seen as having more influence than cognitive deprivation (Foster & Matheson, 1999; van Zomeren et al., 2008).

Discussing the second milestone of politicisation, Simon and Klandermans (2001) observed that grievances are traditionally seen to be fuelled by emotions, most often by anger (van Zomeren, Spears, Fischer & Leach, 2004) or contempt (Tausch, Becker, Spears & Christ, 2008). These emotions easily translate into blame, which is the necessary element in the construction of adversarial attributions, when the out-group enemy is blamed for the in-group's predicament. Such attributions are at the heart of the second step of politicisation. Politicised identity theory posits that while the enemy can take various forms, be it a specific group, the government or 'the system', the blame must be directed outside, towards the out-group. To illustrate, in a historical analysis Glick (2002) demonstrated how German members of the Nazi party justified its atrocious treatment of Jewish people by blaming the latter for German woes. Similarly, in the context of Canadian foreign-trained immigrants, Grant (2008) found that migrants' willingness to participate in a protest was contingent on the external attribution of blame for perceived systematic discrimination of non-Caucasian workers within Canadian society. By contrast,

when the blame is directed at the in-group, politicisation does not develop. Recent meta-analysis undertaken by Smith and colleagues (2012) corroborated this proposition, and gathered additional support for the theory that self-blame leads to de-politicisation.

With regard to the final step, Simon and Klandermans (2001) argued that a group that realised shared grievances and held external opponents responsible, would naturally demand some kind of corrective action. In the event that their demands were met, full politicisation of identity would not happen, and protest would die down. However, if the demands were refused, politicisation would continue to its highest point where the dyadic confrontation between ‘us’ and ‘them’ would be transformed into a broader power struggle involving the public. The researchers pointed out that at this third stage, society would be introduced to the power struggle and would be asked to take sides. A good example of this can be found in the research by Stott and Reicher (2011), who showed how the Tottenham riot of 2011 escalated from a peaceful protest by the friends and family of Mark Duggan when their demands were not met by the police. After that, protesters called upon the members of the wider public outside the black community, to express support against police brutality, and the protest became widespread.

It is important to note that politicised identity is not supposed to be seen as qualitatively different from social identity. Simon and Klandermans (2001, p. 327) stressed that ‘in many respects, politicised collective identity is [therefore] intensified collective (social) identity with quantitatively stronger effects than its nonpoliticised counterpart’. Such understanding implies that individuals whose identity becomes fully politicised are much more likely to engage in active protest since they have a ‘clearer’ vision of grievances and a better understanding of who is to blame for it. Moreover, as they see themselves as part of a broader societal struggle, they are more convinced of the efficacy of their actions in bringing about social change.

Dual pathway and politicised identity models have enjoyed much attention within the social psychology of contentious behaviour and continue to gain robust experimental support (Klandermans, 2014; Simon, 2011). However, these theories have been criticised for having a number of shortcomings. One such shortcomings is identified by Klandermans (2014). While having little objection to the theoretical concepts, he criticised

those theories for failing to take into account multiplicity of identity. He argued that if we followed SIT's claim that people occupy numerous positions in the society and hence have numerous social identities, then we could safely assume that sometimes such identities would come into conflict. He illustrated his point by drawing on the study by Oegema and Klandermans (1994) who explored such a collision of social identifications in the context of the protest against deployment of cruise missiles in the Netherlands. This protest included people who were, at the same time, supporters of the anti-deployment movement (social identity 1) and supporters of the Christian Democratic Party (social identity 2). The problem was that social identity 2 was associated with supporting the deployment, rather than opposing it, due to the Party itself being in favour of it. Consequently, people were faced with a dilemma. The researchers found that the way to resolve it for the majority of participants was to follow their friends. Klandermans (2014) argued that very few studies pay attention to such situations, although the variability of social identifications suggests that people face such situations frequently.

Recently, some attempts to deal with the charge of omitting multiple identities from the research agenda have been made through developing the theory of politicised identity as dual identity (Simon & Grabow, 2010; Simon & Ruhs, 2008). Dual identity is a special case of multiple identification that presumes the coexistence of strong superordinate level identity, such as nation, and strong subordinate level identity, such as class or gender (Klandermans, 2014). It was suggested that the interplay between these two levels results in the construction of identity that responds both to the specific grievances of the subgroup, and to the wider societal concerns. On the topic of the utility of such identification for protest behaviour, Simon and Ruhs (2008) suggested that dual identity is beneficial when it comes to mobilising the support of the public. Referring to the third step of the PCI model, the researchers observed that for the protests to be successful, protesters need to swing the public to their side. They hypothesised that in order to do so protesters would need to have membership in a more inclusive entity than their local in-group. At the same time, they would still need to be members of the aggrieved local community. Simon and Ruhs thus speculated that when dual identification — with the local community as well as with the broader social category — is present, it

will be positively related to politicisation and in turn will be a good predictor of willingness to become involved in protest. Indeed, their data demonstrated the importance of national and sub-national identification for Turkish migrants in Germany. Simon and Grabow (2010) found further evidence for the model of PCI as dual identity. In particular, they examined collective identification processes among Russian migrants in Germany. In line with the earlier research, they discovered that in making their political claims and mobilising for collective action, Russians who live in Germany reported strong ties with more local Russian identity and more inclusive German identity. The former functioned to give the sense of a close-knit aggrieved community, while the latter functioned to put such a community on the same level as other members of superordinate entity, entitling them to receive support from fellow citizens and be treated on the same democratic grounds as them. It was thus argued that when people develop dual identification they are more likely to become politicised and involved in social protest. In fact, there was an issue with such causative logic that the researchers themselves noted: the correlational nature of the study made it impossible to determine what came first, dual politicisation or politicisation. Nonetheless, Simon and Grabow (2010, p. 734) mentioned that they are 'confident' in arguing that political behaviour was caused by the politicisation of identity which in turn was driven by the emergence of dual identification. This effectively makes dual identification the precondition of becoming a protester.

Furthermore, both studies investigated the prediction that, since the local identity is nested within the more generic identity, it should follow its values and norms. Taken further, that would mean that the range of protest activities associated with the local identity would be limited by what they call the 'superordinate normative frame' stemming from the superordinate identity (Simon & Ruhs, 2008, p. 1355). In support of this suggestion, Simon and his team found that in both the Turkish and Russian contexts, the protesters with dual politicised identity were willing to act strictly within the democratic norms of the German identity. In other words, German identity imposed limits on the variety of protest forms available to the participants. The main suggestion here was that dual PCI leads to peaceful political mobilisation sanctioned by the norms of the higher

level membership. In that sense, politicisation was pronounced to be the opposite of radicalisation (see also Klandermans, 2014).

Certainly, research on dual identification addresses some of the criticisms directed against the theories trying to explain protest mobilisation in terms of politicised identity. Exploring dual identities means looking at the variety of different forms and consequences of social membership in more detail, which in turn brings the theoretical research in closer contact with what is happening on the ground. Observing the complex interplay of identities also highlights the dynamic nature of activist politicisation. The exclusive focus on activist identification, however, also has been called into question. In particular, McGarty, Bliuc and colleagues (Bliuc, McGarty, Reynolds & Muntele, 2007; McGarty, Bliuc, Thomas & Bongiorno, 2009; Musgrove & McGarty, 2008) have questioned the power of politicised identity theories to explain mass protests.

Alternative framework for explaining protest — identity and opinion-based groups

To elaborate, Simon, Klandermans and their associates focused on cultural contexts in which social movements (even broadly defined, such as ‘the gay movement’) were objectively given; that is, there often were protest organisations behind the movements. Under such circumstances, the existence of the movement itself provides the means for strong social identification, which acts as the driving force behind protest involvement (van Zomeren et al., 2008). However, the environment does not always provide such straightforward means for identification. For instance, there might simply be no clearly defined single movement behind protests, as in case of recent mass protests against authoritarian regimes. Yet, many people have joined such protests having no prior experience (McGarty, Thomas, Lala, Smith & Bliuc, 2014). It was argued that in more generic movements, such as anti-war protests or protests against the authoritarian regimes, the majority of participants could not be described as activists. In fact, they might actively reject such labelling: McGarty et al. (2009) observed that in large-scale social conflicts only a small fraction of people would be politicised and identify as political activists,

while for the majority of participants political aspects of resistance would be much less important. Rather, they would be just ‘ordinary’ people who took to the street. Bliuc and colleagues took this as evidence to suggest that models grounded in identification with a movement or with an activist identity are limited in their ability to explain mass protests or protests that are not directly associated with distinct movements (Bliuc et al., 2007). Empirically, their proposition was reinforced by identifying a weak statistical links: it was argued that social identification was, while significant, a statistically weak predictor of protest intentions (Musgrove & McGarty, 2008).

Furthermore, McGarty and colleagues (2009) argued that there is little use in trying to explain mass mobilisation in terms of specific activist identities or broader social categories. With regard to the latter, McGarty et al. referred to the case of protests against the invasion of Iraq in 2003. Protest participants were from various socio-economic backgrounds, of different political convictions, and even from different nations; uniting them under the umbrella of a certain social category would be a very difficult and useless task. It is important to note here that these researchers were arguing against the idea of a single social category to unite protesters, but not against the idea of identification itself. Assuming that identification *is* the basis of mobilisation, Bliuc, McGarty and colleagues (Bliuc et al., 2007; McGarty et al., 2009; Musgrove & McGarty, 2008) raised the question of the *type* of identification that has the potential to unite people and turn them into protesters. This led to the development of an alternative mobilisation approach based on opinion-based group membership.

According to the researchers, opinion-based groups (OBGs) are groups of people who share similar beliefs, and are best understood in terms of being pro- or anti an issue or concept. To illustrate, what united people to protest against the invasion of Iraq was their treatment of the invasion as an illegitimate act; in other words, they shared the social identity based on opinion (McGarty et al., 2009). Social identification is thus still important, but it is seen to be structured around attitudes rather than more ‘categorical’ factors such as nationality, social class, memberships in concrete protest groups and so on. Bliuc et al. (2007) admitted that any group can be seen to *involve* some opinions, — for example, identifying as ‘Israeli’ in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict might also

include sharing certain beliefs — however, not any group is *opinion-based*. To illustrate, being ‘pro-Israeli’ — that is defining one’s membership in terms of opinion — is different from being simply ‘Israeli’, where membership is defined based on ethnicity. ‘Israeli’ may imply certain beliefs shared with other Israelis, but this is not necessary in the abstract. On the contrary, ‘pro-Israeli’ presupposes at least minimal agreement with others who have the same views (Musgrove & McGarty, 2008).

More generally, Bliuc and colleagues (2007) argued for a new perspective on protest: in contrast to it being conceptualised as conflict between various social categories, they offer to view it as conflict between people with different opinions. This idea rests on the assumption that people can categorise themselves based on what they believe in or think, in the same way they can categorise themselves in terms of their gender or country of origin. It was proposed that studying collective behaviour through the prism of OBG membership theory provides a better ‘fit’ for the exploration of mass movements participation, where the majority of people would be reluctant to call themselves ‘activists’.

In explaining how OBGs come to be, Bliuc and colleagues suggested that as people come to share certain attitudes, such attitudes become a token of group membership (‘you have the same opinions as I do’) under which the shared social identity is formed. It is worth noting that such reasoning follows the lines of the social identity tradition, and that the OBG explanation is not qualitatively different from politicised collective identity approach. In fact, Bliuc et al. theorised that for some people, shared opinions would act as a basis for politicised identity and emerging activist self-categorisation, in the manner suggested by Simon and Klandermans (2001). The aim of the OBG approach is hence not to dismiss PCI theory altogether, but to upgrade it so it becomes a better predictor of collective action.

With regard to one such improvement, it was suggested that studying the subjective contents of a category would provide more insights into why people mobilise (McGarty et al., 2009). For example, if we are interested in understanding the degree of willingness to participate in feminist protest for equality between men and women, it is more fruitful to look at identification with concrete contents of identity — opinions —

rather than the presence of identification with a broader category or movement. A person can identify strongly with ‘being a woman’ (broad social category), but ‘being a woman’ does not automatically presuppose being pro-equality. On the other hand, if the person identifies with ‘feminist movement’, there is another issue of not knowing what precisely it entails — depending on the content, it might or might not include issues of equality. Again, the willingness to join the protest might be lower. But if we know that a person strongly identifies with being ‘pro-equality’ (psychological group membership showing the content of identity), then this would be a much better predictor of her willingness to take part in a protest.

To summarise, it was suggested that it is not the membership in a social category, as was predicted by PCI approach, but opinion-based group membership that drives collective action. Musgrove and McGarty (2008) proposed that opinion-based groups, being essentially psychological, are structured around a consensus about what the group should believe in, feel, and how its members should behave. They argued that people who identify strongly with an opinion group would be willing to act in line with such norms. In their study, they showed how people who identified as being either pro- or anti- The War on Terror (WoT) military actions showed different behavioural patterns. Perhaps not surprisingly, they found that people who opposed the WoT had stronger protest intentions and weaker offensive actions intentions, and people who supported WoT were less willing to protest but more willing to become involved in offensive actions. A more interesting finding from their study concerned the reasons why this was the case. Following the idea that the meaningful consensus within the group predicts action, Musgrove and McGarty investigated the psychological contents of being pro- or anti- WoT. They discovered that the collective emotional response was an important part of the identity content. In particular, for people in the ‘supporters’ group, being a supporter of WoT meant, among other things, being angry with terrorists for the attacks. On the other hand, people in the ‘opponents’ group shared anger towards the government for their involvement in the WoT. Based on these findings, Musgrove and McGarty suggested that it was not simply the membership of the group, but the emotional consensus within the group, its psychological content, that mediated action orientation. In other words, people were willing to protest

against the government because protesting was perceived as a normative response to being angry at the government, which in turn was perceived as being a normative feeling of being an opponent of WoT. Based on their observations, Musgrove and McGarty proposed that the OBG approach should be used for studying how large-scale protests come to life, and how people form shared group identities based on norms.

Further research by McGarty and colleagues (2014) built on this suggestion. Studying social psychological mechanisms of urbanised middle-class protests in Tunisia and Egypt, the researchers suggested that rapid growth of new social movements was occasioned by emerging social identities facilitated through independent social media, such as Al Jazeera and YouTube. McGarty et al. proposed that organised resistance relied on the construction of shared aggrieved group identity, within which consensual norms of behaviour were created. In other words, mass opposition emerged when people who had anti-government views started to see themselves as a coherent social group. The researchers explained that while some forms of resistance, such as struggles against foreign powers or movements advocating specific rights, can draw on pre-existing identities, in Tunisia and Egypt no such readily available identities existed. Because of this, new identities should have been formed around a positive consensus based on shared societal values. McGarty suggested that in anti-government protests, the opposition faces the ‘taint of illegitimacy that comes from attacking a national government [...] which represents critics as being disloyal to the government’ (p. 729). Hence to unite a group in opposition to the government, shared beliefs should be contingent on the perceived illegitimacy of governmental actions. Moreover, it was proposed that opinion-based protester groups would strive to position themselves as opposing the government but loyal to the nation and the people. In so doing, the groups would draw on positive societal values, in pursuit of showing their ‘loyal’ part to the potential future protesters from the public. McGarty et al. proposed that in order to do that, the groups would have to present their values as the values of the people; in other words, to construct inclusive national identity and present their anti-governmental actions as benefiting the nation. This argument continues the reasoning of Simon and Klandermans (2001) who suggested that the battle for involving third parties would revolve around constructions of shared national identity.

The theories reviewed so far — the dual pathway model, politicised identity model, and opinion-based group membership model — converge on the idea that social identification is the key process of protest mobilisation. Depending on the context, such a process includes assuming available activist identities, collective movement memberships, or identities structured around shared opinions. Simplifying, the argument goes that when people have strong group identities, be it a group or opinion category, they become more susceptible to the group's grievances and more willing to attribute blame to the out-group. This results in mobilisation and subsequent involvement in social protest. While theoretically this looks like a straightforward progression, it is worth remembering the issue mentioned above. The scholars of the identity approach to protest constantly stress that in reality, the processes are intertwined, messy and highly context-dependent. Due to the highly complex nature of these processes, Simon et al. (1998) suggested that more in-depth methods would have an important contribution to the study of identity in protest. In particular, they emphasised the need to engage qualitative methods to learn about specific contents and meanings of social identities. This echoes the argument made by Stuart, Thomas, Donaghue and Russell (2013), that while the concept of identity has been central to the social psychological study of protest, little attention has been paid to the boundaries and normative nature of identities. They propose that qualitative research speaks to such needs in enabling the study of processes of active construction and negotiation of identity contents *in situ*.

So while cognitive studies, inspired by the social identity approach, have largely dominated recent research on protest within social psychology and offered a range of fascinating ideas regarding the role of identity in protest participation, there are a number of criticisms touching upon their methodological constraints. One criticism concerns the nature of experimental design, which is the technique of choice for the majority of social psychologists looking at protest, and which does not allow the exploration of dynamic identity constructions. In particular, Reicher (2004) noticed that the controlled nature of experiments prevents one from exploring *practices* of self-categorisation. Experiments prescribe participants to identify with the categories *a priori* specified by the researcher. As such, the potential of self-categorisation is ignored: there is no space left for exploring

participants' own versions of identity. This is a particularly potent issue for opinion-based group approach scholars, as they claim to study new emergent identities of social protests, but end up 'exploring' them within the limited range of categories offered to participants by the researchers themselves. For example, in the study by Bliuc et al. (2007), participants were asked to circle the statement either 'in support of the government' or 'in support of the opposition', and thus two opinion-based groups were identified. In a similar fashion, Musgrove and McGarty (2008, p. 41) established subjective membership of their participants by asking them to put a cross in a box titled either 'supporter' or 'not a supporter' of WoT. While these imposed limits are certainly useful for the sake of simplification and statistical analyses, questions can be raised about the ecological validity of such group boundaries. It can be argued that in real-life contexts people come to define their memberships and the contents of those of their own accord and potentially in less binary, more diverse ways (Reicher, 2004).

At the same time, pursuit of quantification and finding a better statistical 'fit' replaces the spirit of exploration with the spirit of excavation. In other words, cognitive approaches imply that identifications are objectively present, and the aim of social psychologists is to identify the 'right ones'. Moreover, the excessive focus on causation is in danger of being swayed into seeing social identities as unproblematically causing behaviours. Condemning such projections, Reicher (2004, p. 933) observed that within the classic social identity theory,

social identity is intended as a concept that mediates between social context and the action of human subjects. It is not seen as a psychological reality that determines social reality. The social identity tradition is therefore fundamentally oriented toward variability and possibility in human social behaviour, rather than toward singularity and constraint.

Similarly, Klandermans (1997, p. 2), commenting on the nature of social problems, stated that they 'are not objectively given'; social situations are made into social problems by the people. Applying the same logic to protest identities, the task becomes that of exploring the variability and change in active identity production. In this regard, several researchers have stressed the need to study identity as a process within cultural

interactions rather than a given fact. Drury and Reicher (2000) highlighted that the meanings of social identities are constructed by people with respect to cultural norms. Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans (2007, p. 163) succinctly expressed a similar idea in saying that ‘identifying ourselves or others is a matter of meaning, and meaning always involves interaction: agreement and disagreement, convention and innovation, communication and negotiation’.

With numerous claims of the importance of interaction and rhetoric for the study of protest, the lack of actual interaction-focused works is surprising. Few studies pay careful attention to the role of interactive intergroup processes. The main bulk of research here comes from Reicher and his associates (Drury & Reicher, 2000; Haslam & Reicher, 2012; Reicher, 1984, 1996; Stott & Reicher, 1998a; 1998b). Even fewer studies are concerned with argumentation and identity rhetoric in protest (Hunt & Benford, 1993; Potter & Reicher, 1987; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). In contrast to their more mainstream colleagues who envision identities as products of cognition that can be quantified and measured, researchers of the interaction approach conceptualise identities as discursive projects that people create and manage in talk.

Discursive studies of protest

It has been emphasised that social movement research is interdisciplinary in nature and benefits from being explored from a variety of methodological angles (Goodwin & Jasper, 2003; Klandermans, Kriesi & Tarrow 1988; McAdam, McCarthy & Zald, 1996). In particular, there has been a call for more qualitative studies of protest (van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2013). For instance, Drury and Reicher (2000) argued that a number of socio-psychological models of protest have undeservedly treated social identities as static constructs that automatically presuppose contentious behaviour. They assert that only by taking into account specific contents of identity produced within the specific context of an event, can the model of protest have the potential to explain social change. Practical orientations here clearly outweigh theory implementation: ‘while the social identity model is of use ... it is necessary to recognise how social categories are constructed and

reconstructed in the dynamics of intergroup interaction' (Reicher, 1996, p. 115). In other words, there is a need to study the active practices of self-categorisation, together with exploring the meanings people discursively attribute to notions of protest and opposition.

Following that need, Reicher and colleagues (Drury & Reicher, 2000; Reicher, 1984, 1996; Stott & Reicher, 1998a) set to develop a model of protest behaviour as both an outcome and further determinant of social identity. In particular, they argued that the link between identity and behaviour is underpinned by intergroup interactions that take place during the crowd event. Drury and Reicher (2000) thus challenged earlier views on crowd behaviour as irrational and dangerous (perhaps most famously expressed by Le Bon, 1896/1947). In contrast, they suggested that crowd events are not only rational, but are also instrumental for creating and developing new social meanings and identities. In advocating the need to address the matter of psychological changes that take place within social movement events, they focused on the changes happening to identity; specifically, on the transition from 'disparate individual identities' to 'contextually specified common social identity' (Drury & Reicher, 2000, p. 581).

The conceptualisation of social identity they offered — as a 'position in a set of social relations along with the actions that are possible and proper (legitimate) given such a position' (p. 581), — is highly perceptive. It pays respect both to identity's active and normative dimensions. Perhaps the most salient outcome of this definition is the suggestion that the relationships between actions and identities are essentially normative: certain actions are perceived and articulated as appropriate for certain identities ('I am X, therefore I do Y'). Such a suggestion is made within the tenets of self-categorisation theory (Reicher, 1996), according to which social identification includes the process of self-categorisation, which results in conforming to beliefs and norms associated with the group one identifies with. Reicher and his team took this idea further to propose that such norms were themselves not objective, but the products of rhetoric (Reicher, Cassidy, Wolpert, Hopkins & Levine, 2006).

Social identification and categorisation thus happen in action, and identities have the power to legitimise the behaviour. Drury and Reicher (2000) asserted that identity-building always takes place within a specific context. They suggested that contexts are

frameworks of meaning, created by attitudes and actions of participating groups; such frameworks reciprocally inform each other and constantly re-categorise existing relationships.

An example from the study by Reicher (1996) can help to illustrate this idea. The study set out to find an answer to what happened during the so-called ‘Battle of Westminster’, a conflict between student protesters and the police in 1988 in London. Reicher showed that dynamic identification played a significant role in the development of the conflict. Specifically, he argued that from the start the students viewed themselves as rightful protesters who acted well within the context of legitimacy: their actions were seen by them as an exercise of the democratic right to protest against perceived injustice towards them. Within such a subjective framework, their desire to get to the Parliament to express their views to MPs was seen as a right, while the presence of the police, on the other hand, was seen as an illegitimate obstacle to such a right. The police, however, operated within a different framework of meaning. For them, the protesters were seen to be a threat that warranted their presence on Westminster Bridge. Acting on this perception, the police tried to prevent the students from advancing their protest and crossing the bridge. In response, the protesters recategorised their actions from peaceful demonstration against students’ rights infringement to opposition to illegitimate actions of the police. Within this new context, Reicher explained, conflictual behaviour was deemed legitimate, and it became acceptable for the protesters to actively confront the police cordons. The consequence of such intergroup interaction was the spread of violent confrontation between the students and the police on Westminster Bridge. In other words, appropriation of confrontation depends on the process of discursive categorisation. Reicher’s study demonstrates how complex and dynamic the relationships between protest identification and contentious actions are. It shows how contextual categorisations aid constructions of new identities, within which new actions become possible.

The production of categories and their power to justify protest actions was also evident in research by Potter and Reicher (1987). Looking at the media narratives surrounding the ‘St Paul riot’ of 1980, they used discourse analysis to show how a particular social category — that of a ‘community’ — was deployed to support various

versions of protest. In their analysis, Potter and Reicher focused on the details of content and active use of categories rather than the consequences of simply stating a membership. In so doing, they showed how drawing the boundaries around a single social category could be used to justify behaviour. In particular, they explored the media discourse that portrayed the police as being 'outside the community', thus couching conflict in intergroup terms, as between the police and the black community. Potter and Reicher drew attention to the functional and normative orientations of such categorisation. They argued that drawing a symbolic boundary between the police on one side and the community on the other allowed the speakers to attribute blame: the actions of the police were criticised on the grounds that 'communities' should not be attacked by the police who were supposed to protect them. Second, such categorisation presented the community as being under police attack, and thus legitimised the actions of protesters. Finally, alternative categorisations of protesters as 'trouble-makers' were downplayed on the basis that they were just protecting their own 'community'. To summarise, while Potter and Reicher did not look at the dynamics of identification per se, their study once again drew attention to the importance of looking at identities as discursive projects that fulfil the variety of functions in talk.

Most importantly, research by Reicher and his colleagues has promoted the interactional and interpretative model of the relationships between identity, context and action. The overall framework envisioned protests as social interactive encounters, where people develop identities, draw and redraw symbolic group boundaries, reinterpret the actions and attitudes of other groups and thus create new contexts. In contrast to the approaches that study social identification as the expression of underlying cognitive processes, there is certainly a different focus here: it is not so much on causation, or the nature of identities that mobilise people (activist, opinion-based, or other), but on how people themselves manage and negotiate identities in talk and how these affect protest behaviour. In a way, the discursive approach returns the sense of agency to people; within it, the agents of action are the people who build, dismantle and reshape identities in interaction. With regard to this, Reicher (2004, p. 941) in a radical way suggests that 'theories that presuppose certain categories and category relations as the basis of human

action are quite literally useless'. He went on to advocate the necessity to use the insights of social identity theory to address identity-context links: versatile and creative ways in which identities are constructed in contexts and construct contexts in turn. His image of social identities as projects is useful here. It offers a view of identities as manufactured by people to assist them in any given undertaking, be it justifying a protest or condemning it. According to Reicher, manufacturing happens in interaction through argumentation, 'something that involves a rhetorical dimension and is used strategically' (p. 936).

Following on from this point, further research focused specifically on the rhetorical strategies of protest (Bliuc, McGarty, Hartley & Muntele, 2012; Reicher et al., 2006). Reicher and colleagues (2006) undertook a study of rhetorical mobilisation of social solidarity in Bulgaria during the Second World War. Researching public historical documents, they paid particular attention to the ways Bulgarians made arguments against the persecution and deportation of Bulgarian Jews in 1940-41. Reicher and his colleagues started with the premise that helping behaviour is akin to contentious behaviour in its intrinsic links with social identity boundaries: people are more likely to help and to protest on behalf of those who they perceive to be a part of their in-group. However, they also observed that shared membership alone is not sufficient to fully legitimise behaviour. Drawing on the earlier works by Reicher and Hopkins (2001a; 2001b) and Turner (1999), they proposed that contents of in-group identity are equally important. In particular, they suggested that mobilising attempts would be underpinned by references to the shared norms and values associated with the in-group. They hypothesised that with regard to rhetorical expressions, the 'category boundaries' arguments would work along the lines of 'we save them because they are one of us', while the 'meanings of category membership' arguments would postulate that 'we help them because we are concerned with their wellbeing' (p. 53). To explore their hypotheses, Reicher and colleagues looked at historical documents. They illustrated how advocates of protests against persecution constructed social identities in such a way as to tap into both rhetorical dimensions. First, Jewish people were presented as being a part of the Bulgarian nation ('they are one of us' argument); second, the documents often portrayed anti-Semitism as being outside of the norm for Bulgarians, while tolerance and humanity were advocated as the inherent

characteristics of Bulgarian identity ('we are helping the nation because we are genuinely concerned' argument).

From the outset, the invocation of Bulgarian identity led to cognitive activation of norms associated with this identity and directed the actions (explanation in the spirit of more cognitive approach to collective behaviour; see Simon & Grabow, 2010; Simon & Ruhs, 2008). Reicher and colleagues, however, offered a more nuanced analysis: they suggested that certain norms were *constructed* as essential part of being a Bulgarian. Moreover, such constructions had a practical function. Consequently, behaviour that contradicted such norms was actively delegitimised 'as an assault on the nation' (p. 62), while the behaviour that agreed with such norms was defended as being in the best interest of the nation.

Reicher et al. observed that as arguments based on nationhood are powerful rhetorical tools, they have a great potential to mobilise large numbers of people. They also suggested, however, that national categories do not hold exclusive power to mobilise people. They proposed that other 'banal' categories, that is, categories that the majority of people are socialised into, can be used as well. For instance, calls for mobilisation can be centred around the notions of gender, or class membership such as working class people, or religious beliefs; it can be virtually any category as long as it makes intuitive sense to the members of the culture.

While not refuting this idea, the evidence suggests that national categories are often present in talks on protests. For example, Bliuc et al. (2012) demonstrated how people attempted to construct and align themselves with the categories of Australian national identity. Specifically, they explored pro- and anti-riot arguments in response to the chain of protests against citizens of Middle Eastern Muslim backgrounds in Sydney, Australia. They focused on the post-riot phase in an attempt to understand the divisions of opinion and manufacturing of social identity categories among protest commentators in online forums. Bliuc and colleagues found that both supporters and opponents of protest attempted to construct new social identities through presenting their own beliefs as being characteristic of Australian national identity. They showed that for supporters of riots, identity was constructed as exclusive: being Australian meant having a white European

background, Christian faith, and indignation over gang violence, which was in turn attributed to Muslims. Here again, the function orientation of rhetoric was highlighted: Bliuc and colleagues explained that based on such categorisation, the actions of protest organisers were legitimised on the grounds of them being 'true Aussies'. In contrast, those who opposed the riots advocated a more inclusive multicultural Australian identity, that was discursively associated with a different set of beliefs; those of tolerance and religious freedom. Within such a construct, the actions of protest organisers were condemned as being 'anti-Australian' in nature. Based on their findings, Bliuc et al. proposed that the power of rhetoric lies not simply in the construction of the membership, but in demonstrating commitment to the norms discursively associated with the membership.

In summary, studies by Reicher, Bliuc and colleagues highlight the importance of norms in identity constructions. The researchers show that identities are not empty labels, but active tools as they are associated with relevant norms, which in turn solicit actions. The interplay between identities, norms and actions demonstrates that while normative constructions produced in interaction are the stuff of rhetoric, they have rather tangible consequences: people actively use such constructions to justify the need for action and (de)mobilise protests.

In the same vein, Potter and Wetherell (1987) noted that the ways people discursively construct meanings of protest have large implications for how protest is understood, and, ultimately, for how it develops in action. In line with other scholars discussed above, they criticised the mainstream social psychological approach to protest for failing to include the study of discourse in its agenda, in particular with respect to social constructions of identity. Potter and Wetherell argued that practices of identification and categorisation are inseparable from linguistic practices, and the focus should be shifted from musings about the predictive power of different identities to the explorations of the various ways the self is constructed in context. Drawing on the work of Gergen (1985), they emphasised an important dimension to the discursive study of self: focusing both on the variability of constructions, and on the discursive functions fulfilled through them.

To illustrate the importance of using qualitative discourse analysis for the study of intergroup conflict, Potter and Wetherell (1987) turned to the analyses of open-ended interviews with New Zealanders who talked about the protests surrounding the 1981 Springbok rugby tour. They demonstrated how different, sometimes contrasting, constructions of protesters' identities were brought into play. They showed how three different identifications were used by the interviewees to account for the actions of the police and protesters during the demonstrations. Their main argument was that different identity constructions had different normative functions. For example, an 'only human' identity narrative functioned to legitimise the actions of the police. Within it, the police were portrayed as people who acted naturally in response to violence against them. As such, their own violent actions were rhetorically excused under the presumption that anyone would have acted the same under the circumstances. In a similar way, labelling protesters as either 'genuine protester' or 'stirrer'/'trouble-maker', functioned to (de)legitimise their actions. On the whole, Potter and Wetherell suggested that in articulating a particular identity category, people become engaged in 'typifying' practices. The outcome of such practice is a social category that is immediately recognised by a member of the culture, and, due to its normative nature, on its own is enough to justify the behaviour. For instance, calling one a 'stirrer' prioritises a special motivation (for example, causing trouble) simultaneously removing other potential motivations for protest.

As such, Potter and Wetherell added support to the idea that social identities are not simply determinants of protest mobilisation, but are powerful accounting devices that are used strategically to enforce the speaker's position. They also pointed towards the exceptional flexibility of such devices, showing how different selves can be produced for different purposes within the same narrative, and flipped around in the next account.

In a more recent attempt to systematically analyse dynamic discourses of protest, Stuart et al. (2013) also drew attention to the crucial role of rhetoric. They advocated applying qualitative analysis to the study of activists' talk in order to explore practices of legitimisation and identity management as rhetorical responses to a hostile cultural context. More specifically, they employed thematic analysis to identify how the members of the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society — a radical activist organisation protesting against

whaling — negotiated identity boundaries to establish a legitimate sense of self under the potential accusations of being too radical and violent in their behaviour. Through the analysis of interviews with members of the Society, the study found that the speakers attempted to distance themselves from such accusations through portraying themselves as ‘pirates of passion’. Stuart et al. argued that in actively resisting being called ‘activists’ or ‘protesters’, Sea Shepherd normalised their identity and disavowed the problematic ‘radical’ label. Instead, they discursively linked the sense of who they were with being extremely passionate about protecting the ocean, in turn re-interpreting the meaning of their protest actions from being unreasonably violent (as they were accused in the media) to being understandably committed to defending the ocean at any cost. The researchers suggested that such constructions functioned as negations of criticism against the Society. They argued that the presence of alternative categorisations, that is, the ever-present danger for any protester to be defined as a troublemaker, was exactly what aided the discourses of the participants. In highlighting the need for constant negotiation of identity, Stuart and colleagues demonstrated the argumentative nature of identity talk (Billig, 1991). Their study illustrated the fruitfulness of analysing the details of talk in order to investigate social identity as a flexible resource for resisting labels and establishing one’s behaviour as legitimate.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have reviewed existing empirical and theoretical work on the protest cycle of 2011-2012 in Russia and offered an assessment of major frameworks for understanding protest in social psychology. I argued that while the literature review demonstrates a number of feasible analytic perspectives on Russian protests, with many insightful suggestions being made on the role of structural and psychological factors, the research to date has failed to directly address the individual perspective in terms of local meanings and understandings regarding protest mobilisation and protester identity, especially among the unaffiliated protesters. In other words, although we now have an impressive collection of scholarly explanations as to how and why Russians became

involved in popular protest in 2011-2012, there is little understanding as to how it is understood by protest participants themselves, or whether the mentioned structural, demographic and psychological factors in fact matter to them in the same way they matter to the academic observers. I suggested that social psychology can offer a valuable contribution to the study of protest in Russia, by directing attention to a significant but somehow overlooked variable — discursive interpretations of politically unaffiliated protesters. In my thesis I address this gap in the literature, by a closer examination of individual-level conversational data from Russian protest participants.

I also argued that while the ideas generated by social psychological research on contentious behaviour are illuminating, there are two issues with it. First, there is the issue of focus. It has been argued that looking at different cultural contexts definitely enriches our understanding of protest practices (Johnston & Klandermans, 1995); but while researchers have paid attention to the protest practices of the Arab Spring, Western democracies and some countries of the former Soviet Bloc, to my knowledge there has been no social psychological research that centres on the recent Russian wave of protest. A potential reason for this is the nature of the approach itself — the social psychology of protest has been developing predominantly in the British and American contexts, and has only reached Russian social psychology recently (Melnikova & Kutkovaya, 2014). Popular protest in Russia, however, is the topic that can certainly appeal to social psychological researchers, not least due to the somewhat unique context: the uneasy protest history in general, the ‘hybrid’, semi-authoritarian nature of the regime (Robertson, 2011), underdevelopment of the civil society (Chebankova, 2013), widespread anti-oppositional governmental discourses, and yet, the evidence of strong popular mobilisation. Given these factors, it is all the more reason to pay attention to protesters’ meaning-making practices and their social functions.

Second, there is a wider methodological issue with the psychological research rationale. The logic of positivism that underpins the majority of research within mainstream social psychology in Britain creates what Billig (1996, p. 6) has called ‘a party line’ that commands to translate human behaviour ‘into the statistically analysable fixity of numbers’. Social psychology of protest is not an exception. ‘Positivist’ environment

has encouraged researchers to focus on quantifiable measures of protest as ideal cognitive artefacts behind protest involvement (see Durrheim & Dixon, 2005, for similar criticism). Ironically, such an approach tends to gloss over the very fabric of subjectivity — people's own understandings, the variability of meanings that protesters attribute to their actions, expressed through talk. This is not to say that mainstream research on protest has not pointed in this direction; on the contrary, the review demonstrated that many scholars emphasised the need to employ different — qualitative — methodologies to further explore the topic of protest (Klandermans, 1997; Reicher, 2004; van Zomeren, 2013). Nonetheless, only a handful of studies has taken such appeals seriously (Bliuc et al., 2012; Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Reicher, 1996; Stuart et al., 2013; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). While these studies certainly overcome the issues associated with quantification and cognitivisation of collective behaviour, they tend to focus on the wider discourses, such as perceptions of the public/majority groups (Bliuc et al., 2012; Wetherell & Potter, 1992), and broad media discourses (Potter & Reicher, 1987; Reicher et al., 2006). Such focuses, being undoubtedly important for understanding the full picture, nonetheless largely exclude the voices of those who protest. Reicher (2004) pointed out that if we are to study social change through the lens of collective behaviour, we must focus on the arguments of the main entrepreneurs of such change, the protesters themselves. In the same vein, Billig (1987) suggested that while it is important to look at the argumentation from all parties involved in conflict, the 'disagreeing' side — protesters — is usually the most rhetorically rich and in greater need of examination, as they are the ones in greatest need of persuading the other parties.

In turn, some discursive studies that did look closer at what the protesters were saying, such as Reicher (1996) and Stuart et al. (2013), did so within the generic frameworks of qualitative analysis, such as thematic analysis and critical discourse analysis. While such macro-level analyses elucidate broad discursive patterns, they do less in exploring the strategic use of talk. The authors might indeed have claimed to show conflicting rhetoric in play, but more often, their analyses illustrate a 'slice' of discourse in which people engage in legitimisation of their behaviour, while dynamism and variability of talk are less prioritised. In so doing, existing discursive research on protest

has failed to pay sufficient attention to the dynamic social functions of discourse. Moreover, macro-analytic perspectives are also at a greater risk of being prone to ‘theoretical imperialism’ (Schegloff, 1997); that is, imposing analysts’ interpretations on the data and overlooking the understandings of the participants. Along these lines, Hunt and Benford (1993) criticised macro-level constructionist analyses of social protest movements, arguing that such research tends to unproblematically translate what is being said into scientific constructs and disregard the local functions of talk as a product of social interaction. It appears that micro-analytic perspectives can offer a way out of this. The next chapter will discuss this point in detail.

Overall, the literature review has demonstrated a major lacuna in the literature: the absence of social-psychological qualitative exploration of the recent popular protest in Russia. I will therefore address this gap in my thesis, through exploring how particular versions of protest reality are manufactured and negotiated in conversation by protesters. As the research cited above has highlighted the general moral and normative orientation of anti-governmental protests in Russia, this study will pay special attention to normative and moral considerations of participants’ discourses, in order to develop a more comprehensive understanding of this topic.

My study has an overarching research question as well as four more specific research focuses. In broad terms, the study seeks to answer the question regarding how, within the interactional context of interviews, people who took part in the 2011-2012 protests in Russia account for their protest involvement. The more specific research questions that directly map onto the four empirical chapters of the thesis are:

1. How do protesters display their political interests and manage ‘being politically interested’ in talk about attitudinal change?
2. How do protesters build up the accountability of being actively involved in protests in the context where such involvement is potentially not normative?

3. How do protesters manage ‘oppositional’ identities in talk, and whether indeed such identities are relevant?
4. How do protesters address the accountability of others, especially the people who are not involved in active protest?

I argue that a discursive social psychological approach offers the best means to answer these research questions², and in so doing fill the gaps in our understanding of discursive and social nature of the protest in Russia. The next chapter will outline the methodological approach my study takes.

² Kent and Potter (2014) pointed out that the discursive psychological approach radically transforms the standard principles of psychological research. Importantly, it departs from the dominant hypothetico-deductive reasoning that forces a researcher to formulate research questions (or hypotheses) *first* and then test them. In contrast, discursive psychology starts with data, and it is *during* the analysis that specific research questions begin to be formulated. Hence, it is important to keep in mind that while the overarching research question was driven mostly by the lacunae in the literature, the more specific research questions were strongly influenced by the data as well. They were continuously refined in the course of analytic work, and here I present the final version.

Chapter 2. Methodology

In this chapter, I discuss the methodological approach I have adopted in order to examine how protesters in Russia construct discursive versions of protest. In the first section, I provide background for my method of choice. Specifically, I argue that discursive psychological enquiry is a particularly appropriate methodological approach for studying how people actively construct and manage their accounts of protest mobilisation. After that, I turn to the practical side of the research. I address the empirical process of participant recruitment, data collection and ethical considerations in section 2 and discuss the stages of data analysis in section 3. The kind of data I use in my research can be considered unusual for the chosen approach, which raises certain methodological issues: these are discussed in section 4. The chapter ends with a summary of the main methodological points.

1. Analytic framework

As I have shown in the previous chapter, the phenomenon of protest has been occupying an increasingly prominent position in psychology, with researchers trying to uncover the psychological processes behind contentious behaviour (van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2013). Within the social psychology of protest, the key concern has been with identifying people's cognitions and their causal effect on collective action. I have also pointed out that the greater part of current research on protest in social psychology is grounded in a realist perspective, with explanations being given in terms of psychological entities, such as personal attitudes, perceptions of injustice, emotions, identities and so on. However, an alternative, discursive, analytic 'take' on protest has recently been gaining ground, with more scholars advocating the need to pay more attention to language and the role it plays in constructing protest realities (Bliuc et al., 2012; Klandermans, 1997; Stuart et al., 2013). Crucially, this signifies a departure from the largely positivist assumptions of cognitivism, specifically departing from the idea that language is a neutral medium for thoughts and, as such, is a direct route to cognition. Rather, language constructions are

treated as topics of interest in their own right (Billig, 1991; McKinlay & McVittie, 2008; Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). This type of research relies mainly on qualitative methodology and offers explanations in terms of the dynamics of social interaction, rather than in terms of psychological entities (Burr, 2015).

As I mentioned above, this research project is concerned with detailed examination of how protesters in Russia construct and display their understanding of protest realities. Focus on subjective understandings and construction of meaning leans towards qualitative methodology ‘almost inevitably’ (Ashworth, 2015, p. 5). However, it is important to note that psychology currently offers a variety of methods for conducting qualitative enquiry and investigating the constitutive role of language, including thematic analysis (TA), interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) and various strands of discourse analysis (Smith, 2015; Willig, 2013). Such variability raises the issue of choosing the best methodological ‘fit’ for my study. Thus, over the following three sections I consider the said methods and make a case for the appropriateness of the micro-level discursive approach.

TA and IPA

TA is an analytic technique that aims at generating analytic ‘themes’ that emerge from the data; it treats these themes as reflecting a certain psychological reality of the participants (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It therefore employs qualitative data to establish a more accurate and in-depth picture of human psychology (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). TA has been described as a flexible method that is not tied to a specific epistemological or theoretical perspective and can thus be used to address a wide range of research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Clarke, Braun & Hayfield, 2015; Joffe, 2012). Importantly, however, Clarke et al. (2015, p. 228) have pointed out that research questions that relate to the action orientation of language ‘don’t fit well with TA’. According to these authors, TA is not primarily concerned with language as a form of social action, and hence does not provide the means for detailed exploration of language use. Similarly, Willig (2013) pointed out that while TA is a useful method for identifying common

threads of meaning within qualitative data, it is particularly well-suited for theorising subjective perceptions and social representations on the bases of identified themes, and less so for exploring interactive co-construction of meaning.

IPA is an approach that centres around detailed examination of people's personal experiences of objects and events (Eatough & Smith, 2008). Similarly to TA, IPA places great emphasis on the participants' point of view and works mostly with themes that 'emerge' from the data; however, the analytic focus of the IPA analysis has been described to be primarily on cognition (Smith, 1996; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). Specifically, Smith and Osborn (2015, p. 26) have commented that IPA 'assumes a chain of connection between people's talk and their thinking and emotional state [...] and the researcher has to interpret people's mental and emotional state from what they say'. IPA thus tends to take epistemological position of realism, in a way that it assumes, first, that 'inner' psychological subjective experiences do exist, and second, that these can be revealed by observing and interpreting how people talk about them. The language here is understood as a direct means for describing and communicating private psychological realities. While IPA recognises that direct access to such realities is impossible and the end product of the analysis is always a researcher's interpretation, the majority of studies do not incorporate this idea into their research process and stay vague on the exact impact that the researcher has (Willig, 2013). In effect, IPA pays little attention to the context, both social and interactional, that gives rise to descriptions of particular experiences.

Overall, both TA and IPA seem to ask different questions to what I am interested in: these approaches are more concerned with the nature of the phenomena under investigation rather than with the processes by which phenomena are actively 'talked' into being through discursive practices (Edwards, 1997). Hence neither TA nor IPA offers a suitable methodology to analyse the dynamic production of meaning in interaction. Such a research orientation would clearly require an approach that is concerned with the constitutive role of language and the primacy of interaction in the construction of social reality. Discursive approaches attend to such issues (McKinlay & McVittie, 2008; Potter & Wetherell, 1987).

Discourse-oriented approaches

Discourse-oriented approaches started to gain force in the latter half of the twentieth century, being described as ‘turn to language’ (Gergen, 1985; Kroger & Wood, 1998; Parker, 2012). From the 1950s onwards, social scholars started to become interested in performative and constitutive functions of language use. Guided by the insights from the works of Ludwig Wittgenstein and George Herbert Mead’s symbolic interactionism tradition, those scholars increasingly saw language as an ontologically primary phenomenon (Ashworth, 2015). They criticised the image of humans as self-contained ‘monads’, with their psychological uniqueness being seen as ‘a treasure locked inside, like a pearl in its shell’ (Burkitt, 2008, p. 1). In contrast, they advocated the view that everything was social, and that people developed and managed themselves through normative and contextual social interactions.

Within psychology too, the idea that language was much more than simply a ‘window’ to cognition started to gain momentum with the publication of a paper by Kenneth Gergen in 1973 (Burr, 2015). In his seminal paper, Gergen suggested that all knowledge, including social psychological knowledge, is historically bound and that therefore any attempt to discover universal principles of human nature are doomed to fail. He thus proposed an alternative conceptualisation of psychology as a historical undertaking that studies the production of the social phenomena, by looking at interaction patterns across various temporal and cultural contexts. In the 1980s, a number of important works advocating a discourse-oriented approach to data were published, including Potter and Wetherell’s (1987) *Discourse and social psychology: Beyond attitudes and behaviour*. Potter and Wetherell argued that because people always function within a society, the psychological division between the individual and the social becomes redundant. Their work contained a wide-ranging critique of cognitive psychology and showcased the benefits of detailed analysis of interview transcripts. Consequently, the scholars within the discursive framework argued for the rejection of the duality of psychological reality on the one side, and the language that reflects it on the other. Similarly, the

conceptualisation of language as a pathway to cognition was actively disputed. Cognition itself thus became a fruitless pursuit, and the focus of attention shifted to the ways reality is constructed and performed in language (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). A different category of analysis was subsequently proposed: instead of mental psychological concepts, researchers started to focus on *discursive activity* (Edwards, 1997).

While attention to discursive activity remains the distinct characteristic of discourse-oriented methodologies more broadly, understandings of discourse vary considerably between specific approaches. In particular, two distinct strands of discursive research have been defined, based on the conceptualisation of discourse and the research focus: macro-level discursive approaches that treat discourse as a set of historically produced normative meanings, and micro-level discursive approaches that zoom in on action-orientation of interactions (Danziger, 1997; McKinlay & McVittie, 2008). Willig (2013) proposed that the most used macro-level approach within psychology is Foucauldian discourse analysis (FDA), while discursive psychology (DP) is the most prominent representative of the micro-level approach. It is important to note that macro and micro approaches are not necessarily seen as mutually exclusive: for example, Wetherell (1998, p. 405) has argued against the formation of ‘contrasting camps of discourse analysts’ in social psychology and asserted the need for an eclectic approach that attends both to the local situated nature of accounts *and* the broader social practices. Nonetheless, in recent years the divide between micro- and macro-level research has deepened considerably (Burr, 2015; Willig, 2013).

FDA

The Foucauldian version of discourse analysis is informed by the ideas of post-structuralist philosophers, most notably Michel Foucault. In particular, FDA drew inspiration from Foucault’s argument that language (seen as discourse) and social reality are closely intertwined, with discourses simultaneously shaping reality and being in turn shaped by the current historical and cultural contexts (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 2014). Due to this, language is understood in its broad, ideological sense, and is seen to be inherently

tied up with the issues of power and inequality. People are thought to exercise relations of inequality by assuming 'subject positions' that are 'on offer' within a particular discourse (for example, doctor-patient in medical discourse, or parent-child in family discourse; Parker, 1998).

So while FDA is undoubtedly concerned with language and its role in the construction of social and psychological reality, its focus is on explicating 'ideological functions of language' in constructing the fabric of society (Mayr, 2004; quoted in Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, p. 105). FDA offers to investigate the matters of meaning through identifying discursive constructions used by research participants in a particular socio-historical context. In addition, FDA analysts attach great importance to 'political' research aims, such as exposure of the unequal power relations and giving voice to marginalised groups (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002; Torfing, 1999). Such commitments clearly presuppose going beyond language into the domain of extra-linguistic matters of institutionalised power relations (McKinlay & McVittie, 2008).

On the surface, FDA methodology presents a fruitful opportunity for the study of how protest realities are constructed in Russia. Specifically, FDA's attention to the interplay of power is appealing, as popular mass mobilisation is likely to be linked to the socio-political issues of power struggle, oppression and marginalisation. Nonetheless, FDA methodology poses a number of challenges for a project that wishes to study the interactional production of meaning.

First, macro-level methodologies, such as FDA, have an exclusive focus on 'mapping the discursive environment' (Willig, 2013, p. 155). As a result, they take a specific stance on the issue of agency: they conceptualise speakers as subject to discourse and present subjectivity as a product of discursive interplay. By endowing discourses with the power to shape people's lives, advocates of FDA tend to minimise the extent of people's personal choice and agency. Burr (2015, p. 143) argued that such an impersonal view problematises the very project of discourse analysis: "in order to understand society and social life, we must identify and laid bare the discourses that are currently 'pulling our strings'. However, if this is the case, how is such a task possible? How can we stand outside of and regard the very structures that are producing us?" Hence there is an inherent

tension within FDA connected to the understanding of agency. Related criticism here comes from Schegloff (1997, p. 183), who accuses advocates of a macro-discursive approach of making discourse ‘subservient to contexts not of its participants’ making, but of its analysts’ insistence’. FDA thus offers little help in exploring people’s own orientations.

Second, FDA is not designed to answer questions about the details of meaning production. Because FDA scholars see talk as a manifestation of discourse, it is characteristic for them to divert attention away from the detailed analysis of the contextual language use and focus instead on the nature of discursive constructions (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008). As a result, what is actually said, done with, or accomplished by talk attracts considerably lesser importance. Some criticism was voiced against such a tendency. For instance, Widdicombe (1995) has illustrated how FDA’s preoccupation with making ‘grand’ but somewhat abstract claims about the workings of discourses resulted in the failure to notice the fine details of what the participants actually said. In effect, the subtle ways in which meaning was negotiated and communicated were glossed over, and the participant’s own practical concerns were left unexplored. In addition, it has been pointed out that the transition from the micro-level of language to the macro-level of discourse is a troublesome undertaking in itself, as it raises questions about the validity of claims that certain utterances are manifestations of certain discourse (Edwards, 1997).

To summarise, a macro-level discursive approach, in particular FDA, seem to be preoccupied with ‘big’ questions about the relation between power, discourse and society. While FDA offers a way to interpret protest realities within the broad context of culture and ideology, it does not have the necessary analytic tools to answer the questions about language use and its functional and rhetorical nature. In contrast, micro-level approaches to discourse do focus on practical orientations of language, and treat discourse ‘as a social practice which can be studied as a real-world phenomenon rather than a theoretical abstraction’ (Edwards & Potter, 2000, p. 15).

Discursive psychology

The kind of micro-level discursive approach I would like to focus on in more detail here is discursive psychology (DP). The term was proposed by Derek Edwards and Jonathan Potter to designate a specific kind of discourse analysis dealing with psychological phenomena in talk, and to promote it as ‘a meta-theory and analytical approach’ (Edwards & Potter, 2000, p. 175). The broader discursive psychological approach has been developing in the UK since the 1980s (Potter & Wetherell, 1987), with DP becoming strongly established in the 1990s, in particular at Loughborough University in England (Edwards, 2012; Parker, 2012). This approach borrows extensively from the theory of ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1967) and the social studies of science (Gilbert & Mulkay, 1984); it is also heavily influenced by conversation analysis (Sacks, 1992; Schegloff, 2007).

One of the central features of DP is that it is driven by criticism of the mainstream cognitive treatment of psychological phenomena, and sets out to reconceptualise ‘psychological topics as discourse practices’ (Edwards, 2005a, p. 260). Due to such objectives, DP is interested in how people discursively construct and display accounts related to various psychological issues. In other words, DP scholars are concerned with how psychological issues such as motivation, identification, intention and so on are actively produced and employed pragmatically by people as they interact with each other (Potter, 2004). Practices of human interaction thus comprise the starting point for the analysis (Potter, 2012b).

In addition to the goal of re-evaluating traditional modes of psychological enquiry, Kent and Potter (2014) identified three guiding principles of DP. First, discourse is seen as action oriented. This means that by choosing specific words and arranging them in certain ways, people do not simply describe what they feel or think, but actively construct versions of reality. Talk is hence seen as fulfilling interactional and interpersonal functions, and the task of research becomes one of studying what people do with and through talk. Kent and Potter emphasised that focus on discursive practices makes DP into a highly empirical approach: in order to explore the action-orientation of talk, DP researchers

should stay in close contact with the data and attend to the fine detail of participants' ways of speaking.

Second, DP pays close attention to the situated nature of discursive actions. This includes being aware of various contexts in which accounts are produced, such as the sequential context (where the account is situated in the unfolding conversation), the institutional context (what kind of social situation facilitated account production) and the rhetorical context (what alternative versions does the account counter and what stakes does it manage).

Third, within DP, discourse is understood as both constructed and constructive. It is constructed in the sense of being a product of people's creative action: through the use of linguistic and paralinguistic devices, such as descriptions, metaphors, categories, intonation, pauses and so on, speakers assemble accounts and manufacture discourses. At the same time, when articulated, discourses give various reports of what happened, and thus themselves construct 'facts' of reality (see also Potter, 1996). Such an understanding borrows from a social constructionist idea of reality-in-the-making, a relativist standpoint that the world around us is predominantly constructed by text and talk (Burr, 2015). This last principle is particularly important as it highlights the essentially practical nature of talk. That is, the central awareness that people design their conversations strategically in order to accomplish specific interpersonal and interactional goals.

These principles are incorporated into the Discursive Action Model (DAM), which was proposed by Edwards and Potter (2000) in an attempt to summarise the basic conceptual elements of DP in a coherent fashion. The model consists of three parts, namely action, fact/interest and accountability. The 'action' element relates to the above-mentioned idea that talk is action-oriented and that the focus of DP enquiry should be on the activities carried out through talk rather than on talk as manifestation of cognition. In that light, the understanding of psychological phenomena such as attribution, remembering, attitudes and so on shifts from seeing these as 'modes of being' to seeing them as 'modes of doing'.

The basic premise of DP is that when people say things, they make certain inferences available. Such inferences are linked to the dilemmas of stake and interest,

which is the central theme of the second element of DAM. The theoretical point that Edwards and Potter made is that accounts are governed by the logic of negation; that is, accounts are constructed to counter potential alternative productions (Billig, 1991; 1996). The useful metaphor here is of talk as battle, encapsulated in a well-known rhetorical idea that ‘to speak is to fight’ (Lyotard, 1984, p. 10). According to such a view, every participant’s utterance is a strategic ‘move’ in presenting their own version of events as factual and defending it from being undermined. A study by Edwards (1995) offers a good illustration of this, showing how couples in counselling sessions use descriptions to compete and assign blame through talk.

The third element of DAM is ‘accountability’, which deals with issues of agency and normativity. DP rejects the already described macro-level approaches belief that people are mainly the subjects of discourses; instead, it emphasises the agentic character of accounts production. It is important to stress that DP scholars do not perceive the speaker as being in sovereign control of the talk. For example, Edwards (2012, p. 433) argued that ‘the things people do and say are done with regard to a normative framework of accountability’. This view draws inspiration from the ethnomethodological idea of the existence of shared normative tools that make social actions intelligible (Garfinkel, 1967). In accordance with it, DP encourages researchers to explore how speakers adhere to (or disobey) such rules in talk, how they actively work up accountability and display their sensitivity to the normative frameworks and wider socio-cultural representations (cf. Widdicombe & Wooffitt, 1995).

To summarise, DP emphasises the importance of the situated use of language and its role in production of various accountable versions of reality. Its methodology offers a practical route into studying how people construct and display their subjective realities. This was the main reason why I adopted this micro-level discursive approach. I believe that its theoretical and analytic principles fit particularly well with my research aim of exploring descriptions of ‘protesting’ in contemporary Russia, due to its focus on the detailed use of language in the active production of psychological phenomena, such as attitudes, motives and identity, in talk, and on exploring the matters of accountability. As discussed in the literature review, studies of Russian protest show that issues related to

contentious behaviour are of fundamental moral and normative nature. DP offers a practical way to study morality in participants' own terms, as locally performed and negotiated in interaction, and to explore the potential stakes and interests protesters in Russia might have.

While my analysis is not intended as a systematic exploration of the psychological thesaurus and does not focus on specific expressions of the psychological lexicon (Edwards & Potter, 2005), it attends to phenomena traditionally studied within psychology, such as attitudes, motives and identities. It is hence appropriate to call my methodology discursive *psychology*, rather than simply discourse analysis. In addition, my research shares the DP commitment to re-specification of psychological topics as discursive practices. I take a critical stance towards an exclusive focus on cognition within the social psychology of protest, and argue for the benefit of adopting various methodological lenses in the study of contentious behaviour. DP is one of such lenses, which can greatly enrich our understanding of protest in Russia and protest in hybrid regimes more generally. While DP research as yet has not looked at protest movements in detail (J. Potter, personal communication, May 14, 2014), there is no reason why it cannot do so. It has been suggested that DP 'cuts across the fragmented sub-fields that have emerged within psychology' (Edwards & Potter, 2000, p. 175). As such, the analytic framework of discursive psychology is highly befitting for this PhD study.

In the second part of this chapter, I turn to the practical side of my research, and show how DP approach was realised in practice.

2. Data collection

The interview data and participants

In order to examine constructions of protest behaviour in Russia, I collected 48 informal semi-structured interviews with Russians who reportedly took part in anti-governmental protests from 2011 onwards. The data collection process took place between July and September 2013. 25 male and 23 female Russian nationals were interviewed

during the course of data collection; all participants were over 18 years old, with the youngest being 20, and the oldest 61. Most of the interviews were conducted in person during my fieldwork in Russia, across the three Russian cities of Moscow, Saint Petersburg and Volgograd. The final three interviews were collected using Skype (Internet calling software) while I was in the UK, with one participant calling from Saint Petersburg, one from Moscow, and one from another smaller Russian city, Samara. Overall, the majority of the participants came from Moscow (23) and Saint Petersburg (16), with 8 people coming from Volgograd and 1 from Samara.

The decision to recruit people from different cities was motivated by practical concerns as well as by research interest in the potential variability of the data. First, not limiting research to one city increased the possibility of obtaining more participants. Second, I was interested in whether there would be a difference between the accounts given by protesters coming from the capital and those coming from provincial cities. The reason for such an interest stemmed from a notable dissimilarity of the protest environment: Russia's nominal and 'cultural' capitals — Moscow and St Petersburg — were the centres of large-scale protests in 2011-2012, whereas in Volgograd and Samara, which are regional cities, considerably less public protest took place, with protesting likely to be perceived as more risky and reprehensible. I thus hypothesised that there might be patterns of construction characteristic to specific geographic areas. In retrospect, that hypothesis was not supported. An additional reason for taking into account the views of protesters from Russia's smaller cities relates to the lack of such perspective in the literature: the majority of previous works on contentious behaviour in Russia predictably focus on protesters from Moscow and Saint Petersburg (Lobanova & Semenov, 2015). Hence, the data from a different context provide a valuable contribution to research.

A typical interview lasted between 55 and 65 minutes, with the longest interviews taking 120 minutes to finish and the shortest taking 40 minutes. All conversations were in Russian. Every interview was recorded using a dictaphone, with audio recordings later being transferred to a secure PC location.

Sampling strategies

The majority of the participants were recruited through social media (Facebook and its Russian-language analogue, VKontakte) and some through acquaintances.

In the case of social media, I posted a short advertisement on my personal page on the two above-mentioned websites. In the advertisement, I briefly described my study as exploring ‘attitudes to oppositional activity in Russia’, and said that I was looking for people ‘of broad liberal-democratic views’, who were ‘discontented with the official political regime to some degree’ and who had actively participated in anti-governmental protests. It is important to note that I did not specify the particular forms of active protest I was interested in. It has been argued that in contemporary Russia, partially due to its uneasy history of open dissent, civic activism takes a wide range of forms: together with participation in organised street demonstrations, it includes many other informal and semi-informal practices (Chebankova, 2013). Limiting the respondents to only those, for example, who took part in organised street demonstrations, would risk overlooking the variability of such practices. In addition, what counts as ‘active protest’ was an interesting topic in itself, and keeping the wording of the advertisement less specific would allow the potential investigation of the meanings that protesters attached to that notion.

Calling on people with ‘broad liberal-democratic views’ and those ‘discontented with the official political regime’ was part of the strategy to exclude people who held strong political views (or membership of a party) and took part in protests organised by the state (for an example of the latter, see Kal’k, 2012). This was in line with my study’s focus on unaffiliated, ‘ordinary’ protesters as opposed to professional political activists. It is important to emphasise here that I do not attach analytic or theoretical primacy to the ‘ordinary’ category; that is, I do not use it to explain my findings. Neither do I argue that ‘ordinary’ protesters comprise a distinct group that can be unproblematically compared to other protest communities. Rather, I employ this label for practical reasons: I find it to be a useful marker for denoting my sample, and to be a helpful reminder of my study’s concern with the people who are often overlooked in traditional psychological research that is centred around organised political activism.

In the advertisement, I asked the people who were interested to contact me via e-mail. That advertisement was ‘shared’ (reposted on their web-pages) by a number of people, which also helped to generate more responses. Via e-mail, I answered their questions about the study, and, if people were happy to take part in it, organised the date and time for the interviews. Participants were recruited with the purpose of ensuring diversity (male/female, age diversity), although in a less ‘protesting’ context, such as Volgograd, convenience sampling was also used.

In the case of personal introductions, I followed the logic of ‘snowball’ sampling, by asking people I knew in Russia to introduce me to their oppositionally-minded acquaintances, in turn asking the latter to introduce me to their acquaintances, and so on. This recruitment strategy was shown to be particularly useful for reaching the hidden and generally hard-to-reach populations (Atkinson & Flint, 2001; Faugier & Sargeant, 1997). Protesters in Russia can be seen as part of such populations for a number of reasons, including social stigmatisation of protest behaviour (Lanskoy & Suthers, 2013; White, 2013) and a certain degree of suspicion towards official enquiries into protest behaviour (on numerous occasions I was asked whether I was a KGB/FBI/CIA spy, and not always humorously). The snowballing sampling was hence used as a ‘back-up’ strategy that was intended to partially overcome potential issues of trust, as referrals were made through acquaintances and friends rather than through more formal methods of identification. Personal introductions followed the same procedure as advertisements: prospective participants were given my e-mail and asked to contact me directly if they were interested.

Interviewees were not paid for their participation. Lack of monetary reward was not discussed openly, but the fact that none of the interviewees asked for it suggests that it was not expected. In fact, it is likely that offering money for participation might have complicated the research situation: on various occasions, several participants have noted that taking money from a researcher from the UK would be not appropriate, as it would give indirect support to a state-promoted propaganda notion that people were paid to take part in protests by some Western forces (Pomerantsev, 2015).

Interview process

The date, time and place for the interview were agreed upon via e-mail or, if participants were more comfortable with using it, mobile phone. All interviews were conducted individually, with only the interviewee and myself present. Conversations were held in appropriate public places, usually a park or a cafe, and, where possible, in a library room.

Before the interview, participants were given the Information Sheet and Consent Form (see Appendixes A and B respectively), invited to read both forms and sign the latter. They were also encouraged to ask questions related to the study or the interview procedure. After the Consent Form was signed, I asked for the participant's age and occupation. These were the only demographic details directly asked for; they were noted on the Consent Form and used for a general description of the sample. The interviewees were given a copy of the Information Sheet and Consent Form to keep. Once these matters were settled, I switched the dictaphone on and the interview began. In the majority of cases, the interview proceeded undisturbed; in some situations, however, the interviewee asked for a short break, usually in order to answer a phone call. On such occasions, I stopped the recording and resumed it when the participant was ready to continue.

The interview process was guided by an interview schedule (see Appendix D). The interviews were therefore semi-structured in nature; however, I aimed to keep the conversations as open-ended as possible, to enable the interviewees to bring up the topics that were meaningful to them and speak spontaneously about their experiences and any events they understood as related to protest. In effect, some of the 'standard' pre-defined questions were worded differently, and some unique, specific to the context of a particular interview questions were asked. 'Standard' questions were as non-directive as possible; I also refrained from using technical terms and psychological jargon, in an attempt to avoid 'flooding' the conversation with the research agenda (Potter & Hepburn, 2012). At the end of an interview a participant was always asked the question 'Is there anything else you'd like to mention that we haven't talked about?' to give the interviewees another opportunity to comment on potentially overlooked but personally relevant issues.

After the interview had finished, the dictaphone was switched off and the Debriefing Sheet (see Appendix C) was given to the participant. If interviewees had more questions, we would spend some time talking off record about them. If any potentially interesting information was shared during these unrecorded conversations, I asked for permission to switch on the dictaphone and to record again.

The interview questions were developed based on the literature on contentious behaviour and protest in Russia. They were primarily designed to elicit talk about the subjective experiences and understandings of protest. The interview schedule covered five main topics. First, I asked about respondents' attitudes to politics and the political situation in Russia, as the literature seems to suggest that interest in politics is one of the prerequisites of becoming involved in anti-governmental protests. Second, I enquired about participants' position vis-à-vis 'the opposition', this being the standard label used to describe anti-government protesters in Russia. Third, I asked questions related to the subjective importance and motives for protesting, based on my research interest in the topic of mobilisation. Fourth, interviewees were asked whether protesting was important to them as Russians, which was intended to tap into national identity and its potential importance for protest behaviour (see Reicher & Hopkins, 2001a). Finally, there was a set of questions related to other people's attitudes to respondents' contentious behaviour, based on the suggestion made by Simon and Klandermans (2001) that protesters would try to mobilise public support for protest. The interview schedule contained a separate question asking respondents to share their protest experiences ('Can you tell me about your protest experience?' and 'What have you done?') but it was rarely asked since the majority of participants talked about their experiences spontaneously or in response to other questions. Depending on the answer given to the question about one's relation to the opposition (i.e. 'part of the opposition', 'supporter of the opposition' and so on), slightly different questions followed. Full details of the interview schedule are given in Appendix D.

The initial interview schedule was slightly amended after the first few interviews, as one open-ended question continuously resulted in confusion, and some other more 'closed' questions produced only brief answers. An example of the former was interview

question number 7, 'Is what you are doing important for you as Russian?' A number of participants pointed out that they did not understand it and that it was 'too abstract'. I made that question more specific by asking participants whether their protest was in any way connected to their feelings of citizenship, such as responsibility or love for Russia, and whether they thought protest was a matter of national, and not simply personal, importance. An example of the latter was the first question on the interview schedule, 'Have you ever been involved in a political party or a social movement?' This question overwhelmingly resulted in brief negative answers ('no', 'no, never', etc.). I hence made the decision to replace that question with 'Please tell me a bit about yourself, in particular about your views on the political situation in Russia and how they have changed?' Although somewhat cumbersome, this question successfully provided the needed impetus to start the interview, by facilitating extended answers.

For Skype interviews, the process was similar. The information Sheet and Consent Form were sent to participants via Skype, and oral consent was obtained, granting permission to put the participant name on the printed version of the Consent Form. After that, I would make a voice call, and the interview would begin. I chose not to use a webcam, in order to minimise the potential connection issues that might arise when too much data is being uploaded. No participant asked to turn it on, either due to the similar connection issue or due to being more comfortable speaking without video. After the interview had finished, I would thank my participant and electronically send over a copy of the Debriefing Sheet. As with in-person interviews, we usually talked for a short time after the recording equipment was switched off. In the end, participants were thanked and invited to contact me if they had any future enquiries.

Ethical considerations

My study was designed in accordance with the British Psychological Society (BPS) and the American Psychological Association (APA) codes of conduct. Ethical approval for the study was granted by the University of Edinburgh Psychology Ethics Committee in June 2013. In compliance with the ethics guidelines, all participants were

provided with an Information Sheet and a Consent Form before the start of the interview. Both forms were designed in English and translated into Russian by me. The Information Sheet included a general description of my study, an outline of the procedure aimed to familiarise respondents with the process of the interview and the subsequent data treatment, and the section on participants rights. An emphasis was made on the preservation of confidentiality and anonymity; for example, it was stated that no names would appear in the thesis or publications, and the only personal detail used would be gender, age and the city in which interview was taken. The Consent Form asked participants to write their first name and provide a signature, as a sign of their voluntary participation in the interview. In addition, I told participants that they should feel free not to answer questions and that they could withdraw from the study or ask to switch the recorder off at any point without the need to explain themselves.

All participants were given both my and my supervisor's e-mails, and were invited to contact me in case they had any issues with their involvement in the study or if they wished to withdraw their interview. After the interview, participants were thanked orally and given the Debriefing Sheet, in which they were once again thanked in writing for taking part in the study, and encouraged to contact me if they wished to know more about the study or its findings.

Due to the sensitive nature of the topic of protest activism, especially given its perception as a 'deviant' activity, promoted by the semi-authoritarian Russian regime (Robertson, 2011), additional precautions needed to be taken. First, this minimised the possibility of being overheard. Where possible, I conducted interviews in private conference rooms at the Moscow and St Petersburg State libraries. In Volgograd, a number of interviews were recorded at the State Volgograd University interview room. In certain cases, when it was specifically requested by the participants and the safety of the researcher was carefully considered, the interviews took place in the privacy of participants' homes. When public spaces like parks and cafes were used, I made sure that the interviewee and I sat at a distance from other people. Second, no additional information that might have disclosed participants' identities (such as surname) was specifically asked for, although in certain cases participants insisted on providing it; then,

it was noted but still not included in the thesis. Hence necessary precautions were made to make the participant feel secure and comfortable and encourage them to talk freely.

3. Data analysis

It has been argued that most types of discourse analysis proceed through a constant interaction between a researcher and a text, with no standardised procedures for eliciting findings (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Willig, 2013). In advising scholars on how to do the actual analysis, Potter and Wetherell (1987, p. 168) gave only one ‘basic’ suggestion: ‘analysis involves a lot of careful reading and rereading’. Importantly, they emphasised that ‘reading’ meant being concerned with what was actually said, rather than with what a person seemed to mean, or what she seemed to think. Similarly, Edwards and Potter (2000) suggested that accurate and detailed analysis of the actual data is the central analytic task for discursive psychologists. The need to stay closely engaged with the data meant that a big part of preliminary data analysis was devoted to creating accurate transcripts from the digital recordings.

I started by repeatedly listening to the recordings of the interviews in the Russian language, paying attention both to the content of what was said and to paralinguistic aspects of talk, such as intonation, pauses and laughter. I used the Audacity programme (sound editing software) to store and play the files. A second step of the analysis was creating generic transcripts and identifying provisional features of analytic interest in the data. While some generic transcripts were created by me, others were done by a professional Russian transcriber in order to speed up the process of transcription. These transcripts were checked by me and refined where needed. Initial simplified version transcripts included all the spoken words of the interviewee and the interviewer (with some of the interviewer’s reactions, such as ‘mmhm’, being omitted) and some notable paralinguistic details, such as long pauses (not timed), emphasised words and prolonged laughter. Kent and Potter (2014, p. 306) pointed out that such ‘first-pass’ transcripts are useful in that they allow researchers to ‘sift through’ many hours of recordings and ‘get an overall feel’ of the data. In line with this, I read and re-read basic transcripts continually

in order to identify potential instances of interest and patterns, and grouped these together into broad collections of various conversational phenomena (essentially, this was the process of ‘coding’, but see Potter, 2004, on the issues with using this term). Collections were built around the actions that interviewees seemed to perform, such as, for example, ‘responding to enquiries about political interest’, ‘constructing reasons for active protest involvement’ and ‘negotiating protest identities’. Although my main analytic focus in producing collections was on action orientation of talk, content was also important for weaving together a coherent analytic story, as certain actions tended to be related to certain topics identified in interview questions: for example, discursive action of building up accountability often occurred when interviewees were discussing why other people do not protest.

The central part of the analysis was comprised of a more detailed examination of the various data collections. Selection of specific extracts was guided both by my theoretical interests stemming from the literature (focus on mobilisation, for example) and by empirical observations originating from reading and re-reading individual interviews. As an example of the latter, I observed that when the interviewees were asked about their interest in politics, they repeatedly denied having prior interest and provided various accounts of how they became interested. That seemed an interesting topic to explore, especially given that many social psychological models theorise that being a protester presupposes having political interest. In effect, analysis of such accounts formed the basis of the first empirical chapter.

Since the more detailed analysis required specific attention to the more subtle aspects of interaction, I used the guidelines developed by Jefferson (2004b) to transform the selected basic transcripts into standard CA transcripts. The upgraded transcripts showed instances of overlap, intonation and emphasis, the speed of delivery and the duration of pauses (see Appendix E for the explanation of transcription symbols used). These were then translated into English by me. While I tried to keep the translation as literal as possible, certain modifications were sometimes needed, mostly concerning word order and idiomatic expressions. Because of the obvious ‘distance’ between Russian and English spelling it was impossible to accurately represent prolongation of sounds, so it

was omitted in the majority of translated transcripts. In section five below I discuss methodological issues raised by translation in more detail.

When analysing the data, I usually went back and forth between the Russian and English versions of my CA transcripts. The analysis was mostly done on the Russian version, but since the write-up had to be done in English I found it helpful to keep both versions present at the same time. To save space, it was decided to include only the translated version of the extracts in the thesis; however, where needed I provided original Russian expressions and gave specific explanations.

Following previous examples of DP research, my own analysis was guided by a number of principles, such as consideration of context, concern with fine details of talk and analytic attention to the variability of discursive devices (Edwards & Potter, 2000; Potter, 2004; Willig, 2013).

First, it has been widely argued that DP analysis is underpinned by interest in talk as *situated* activity, that is, as taking part within certain discursive contexts (Edwards & Potter, 2000). The importance of context was nicely summarised by Potter (1996, p. 43), when he wrote that ‘the study of what an utterance means will not reach a satisfactory conclusion without some understanding of the occasion on which the utterance is used’. Taking account of context presupposes paying attention both to the ‘general’ context of interaction, the social and cultural situations it takes place in (for example, a situation of a research interview with a female protester in Russia) and to the ‘sequential’ context which is established by the participants through turn-taking in the course of an interaction (Sidnell, 2010). Hence, I maintained attention to the specifics of the situation in which, and for which, a given account is produced. In practical terms, I did it by analysing stretches of talk rather than isolated utterances, in order to keep track of sequential context; and by continually asking myself questions such as ‘what do participants treat as context here?’ (Edwards, 1997) and ‘how do I know that wider social contexts are relevant to the participants themselves? Do they display it in the data?’ (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008; Schegloff, 2007). In so doing, I adhered to the principle of ‘ethnomethodological indifference’ (Garfinkel & Sacks, 1970), an idea that any *a priori* assumption about the

relevance of contextual variables or theoretical concepts is of little use to the analysis *unless* it is oriented to by the participants in talk.

Second, the analytic style of DP, being informed by the preciseness of conversation analysis, is characterised by fine-grained explication of talk. In this regard, Potter (2004, p. 616) argued that ‘attending to the specifics of what is said and how it is said is essential for producing high-quality analysis’. The analysts, therefore, need to inspect closely the detail of interaction, embracing the idea that any subtle detail can potentially be important for assisting the production of a concrete version of events (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008). For my own analysis, this meant commitment to ‘circular’ close readings of the interviews and focusing in equal proportions on the gist of what was said and on the detailed features of how it was said, including hesitations, repairs, specific lexical choices and so on.

Third, I made use of previous findings regarding the richness of discursive devices that can be used by participants to present their accounts as factual and trustworthy. Among these are vivid descriptions, lists, extreme case formulations, category entitlements, rhetorical formats, systemic vagueness and so on (Edwards & Potter, 2000). I will provide more explanations of these devices below, as we encounter them in empirical chapters. Here, it is important to notice that the analysis went beyond mere ‘spotting’ of interesting devices, which was argued to be insufficient for a quality analysis (Antaki, Billig, Edwards & Potter, 2003); rather, I attempted to explore how various discursive devices assisted the accomplishment of specific interactional business at hand.

Overall, while the data analysis relied inevitably on my own understanding of what was going on in the data, that understanding in turn relied on taking into account the context, variability and subtleties of construction and participants’ own orientations. I developed my analyses in close contact with the data, constantly striving to validate my analytic claims with detailed evidence. An additional validating ‘tool’ for my analytic work was keeping a dialogue with like-minded colleagues, in particular at the data sessions held by the SEDIT (Scottish Ethnomethodology, Discourse, Interactions and Talk) group and during the meetings with my supervisors.

4. Methodological issues

Discursive psychology and interview talk

The data I am investigating in my doctoral research are accounts of personal protest involvement produced in response to interview questions. While qualitative interviewing has long been an established method in social psychological research and a method of choice for many discourse-oriented scholars (McKinlay & McVittie, 2008; Potter & Hepburn, 2012; Willig, 2013), it has been pointed out that discursive psychologists have a certain dislike for it. In particular, tracing developments within DP, Hepburn and Wiggins (2005) suggested that the recent move towards the study of naturalistic interaction in institutional settings was an attempt to overcome numerous 'endemic' problems of interview-led research. Wiggins and Potter (2008, p. 75) were more radical in arguing that DP has 'almost completely abandon[ed]' open-ended research interviews as data-generating technique. Furthermore, Kent and Potter (2014, p. 305) wrote that 'discursive psychologists prefer to analyse 'naturalistic' rather than 'got-up' materials'. They explained that such preference is grounded in DP's objective on studying 'people living their lives [...] instead of answering researcher's questions' (p. 305). The first methodological issue thus relates to the appropriateness of using interviews as the method of data collection in a discursive psychological study.

Reluctance to use interview materials among DP scholars has been explained by invoking the close association between DP and conversation analysis, the approach that privileges naturally occurring interactions over pre-arranged and specifically produced ones (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008). Subsequently, DP scholars too have expressed a certain preference for the data that were *not* facilitated by a researcher (Hepburn & Potter, 2007; Lester, 2014). Naturally occurring data are seen as preferable for several reasons. Highlighting the issues that interview materials potentially create for discursive psychological research, Potter and Hepburn (2005, p. 281) named five 'contingent' and four 'necessary' problems. With regard to the former, the authors mentioned not paying sufficient attention to the role of the interviewer, neglecting interactionally hearable

features (such as laughter, pauses and latches) in a transcript, making global observations detached from the data, omitting the details of the interview set-up and failing to consider interviews as interactions. As for the ‘necessary’ problems, Potter and Hepburn identified ‘flooding’ the analysis with a social science agenda and categories, overlooking the significance and variability of footing (i.e. which position(s) the interviewee and interviewer are speaking from), not attending to the issue of interactional stakes and interests and treating cognitive talk as referring to inner psychological phenomena while overlooking its practical role. While ‘contingent’ issues can be more or less straightforwardly addressed by providing enough contextual information, transcribing interviews in detail and paying attention to the interactive production of the data while making analytic observations, ‘necessary’ issues are more complex in the way that they require special analytic awareness. Because of these difficulties, the authors proposed that interviews are ‘overused’ and more qualitative scholars should consider the use of naturalistic recordings.

Nonetheless, I consider my preference for the interview method justifiable for a number of reasons. First, while this method might not be currently the method of choice for discursive psychology, as long as the interview is recognised as conversation in its own right, there seems to be no absolute objection to using it. As was acknowledged by Potter and Hepburn (2012), interview analysis, while being a highly challenging undertaking, provides unique opportunities for qualitative researchers. In particular, it allows for a more subtle understanding of how things are constructed in talk, and of the effect interpersonal factors and agendas might have on such constructions. Understanding the true potential of the interview method can also help to open up new methodological issues, for example how researchers ‘shape’ data and analyses. Similarly, Potter (2012b) pointed out that as long as the analyst exercises careful reflexive attention to the interview as a practice, and takes into account the profound role interviewers’ questions and reactions play in generating interviewee’s responses, open-ended interviews offer an effective means to studying psychological phenomena as participants’ concerns. In my study, I treat interviews as instances of social interaction, where the speakers — the interviewee *and* the interviewer — contribute to the production of certain versions of

reality (Wooffitt & Widdicombe, 2006). Embracing suggestions made by Rapley (2001), I recognise the interactional and social nature of the interview process and present the data so that it reflects the work done by both the interviewee and the interviewer.

Second, a number of scholars have argued that issues of stake and interest, footing, 'flooding' and so on are not limited to the interview context and are indeed present in all interactional settings; therefore, not using interviews does not reduce the burden of the analysis (Smith, Hollway & Mishler, 2005). Along similar lines, Speer (2002a) has criticised the distinction between natural and non-natural types of data as inherently problematic and unhelpful. She suggested that some researchers' desire to avoid complications and biases associated with 'contrived' data indicates certain theoretical inconsistencies. Specifically, she argued convincingly that when discursive scholars insist that researcher-led methods are biased in some way, they treat the method as a resource to get to the data. Such an ontological separation between the method and the data seems to clash with the relativistic epistemological stance advocated by those scholars: it implies that the latter is the consequence of the former. In other words, it is theorised that the character of the resulting data is somehow pre-determined by the context of interview. However, it has been stated by both CA and DP researchers that it should not be decided in advance that a certain context would definitely have a certain impact; rather, what matters should be explored by studying participants' orientations and practices (Atkinson & Heritage, 1984; Edwards, 1997; Edwards & Potter, 2000). Such inconsistency, according to Speer, illustrates the futility of any attempt to obtain pure, unbiased data.

A related further point was made by Widdicombe and Wooffitt (1995, p. 73), who argued that in order to agree with the claim that the interview situation is somehow obstructing the natural flow of conversation, 'the relevance of talk as 'interview talk' (or any other kind of categorisation of the interaction) should be manifest in the data'. Speer & Hutchby (2003) offered examples of such circumstances, when interview settings were explicitly oriented to by the participants. If, on the other hand, participants make no comments about the format of the talk, recording devices, etc., then questions can be raised regarding the criticism of the interview as a 'biased' method. Indeed, in the original manifesto of DP, Edwards and Potter (2000, p. 28) argued that 'discourse analysis deals

with naturally occurring talk and text, *including interview transcripts understood in this way*' (my emphasis). So as long as participants seem to take the interview as just another type of conversation, why should we as analysts treat it differently? Thus in my study, unless the participants specifically pointed to the format of the talk as 'interview' (in which case it would be noted and discussed), I understand interviews as informal conversations.

Finally, the choice of data collection is understandably guided by practical considerations. The interview method has been described as having a number of advantages (Wetherell & Potter, 1992). It allows the researcher to focus on a relatively standard range of related topics and explore them in detail. At the same time, interviews provide the opportunity for participants to talk at length about their own concerns and understandings. Also, as a directional method of enquiry, the interview technique permits the collection of a large corpus of data in the situation of limited time and money, which is especially important in the context of PhD research. In addition, there are situations when the use of interviews is necessary because it is difficult or impossible to obtain more 'naturalistic' data (Silverman, 2004). In case of my study, it is reasonable to assume that spontaneous 'mundane' discussions of such a sensitive topic as active protest participation would be rare, and hence difficult to gain access to. Practically, then, interviews appear to be the most feasible method of data collection.

There are hence three main arguments for the appropriateness of using conversational qualitative interviews to collect data for my study. First, I treat the interview situation as a 'normal' interaction (unless a respondent positions it otherwise), and pay attention to the active role of both interactants involved in it. Second, the interview is not ontologically dissimilar to 'natural' data, and does not pose specific insuperable problems. Relating back to the words of Kent and Potter (2014) cited above, interviews might as well be seen as a part of people living their lives. Third, using the interview is practical, especially in the context of the topic on which more publicly available discussions are unlikely to exist. Thus, the interview is a useful method of exposing protesters' sense-making practices, and is capable of providing insights into the interactional and interpersonal issues people manage in their discourses. That being said,

I acknowledge that choosing the method of interview places certain limitations on my research (i.e. generalisability of findings); I will address these in Chapter 7.

Dilemmas of translation

An additional issue my study raises relates to translation. All the interviews were conducted in Russian and then translated into English for the purpose of research. Inevitably, the process of translation included choices about what words and expressions to use, and how best to express the original meanings communicated by the participants. Moreover, as Temple (1997) has pointed out, there are important considerations about historically specific concepts and certain idiomatic expressions and metaphors. She gave the example of a concept ‘being in a family’ in Polish, which is not identical to its English translation due to the history of expression in Poland. Nonetheless, there are practical limits as to how far researchers can engage with linguistic debates, especially if the aim of their work does not concern the issue of interpretation directly (Venuti, 1992). In my case, the limits were both temporal (I could not afford time and space to provide detailed information on word order, semantics, grammar differences and so on) and conceptual (due to the sensitive nature of the data, I did not wish to share the original recordings with external translators). I thus made the decision not to ask for professional translation services. Being a native Russian speaker who is fluent in English, I did all translations myself. I do not argue that my being the translator achieved a somewhat more ‘truthful’ and valid version of interpretation. Indeed, a number of researchers have pointed out that the ‘researcher as translator’ model might be problematic due to the socio-cultural positioning of the researcher and the associated insider/outsider issues (Gawlewicz, 2016; Wong & Poon, 2010). Recognising these limitations, I would nonetheless suggest that being both researcher and translator ‘in one’ was beneficial for the analysis, as it allowed me to pay close attention to the specificities of cultural meaning and capture fine details of talk which is paramount for micro-level discursive research (Temple & Young, 2004).

Issues that the interpretation process poses for qualitative researchers have been discussed by others, often in terms of accuracy and correctness of translation. For instance,

Nurjannah, Mills, Park and Usher (2014) have offered practical advice on these matters in translation. In particular, they suggested that discussing the versions of translation among the research team or colleagues is highly beneficial for the validity of the analysis. Likewise, close constant attention to both the original and the translated versions during the analysis was positioned as essential. Furthermore, Nikander (2008) described a number of strategies to deal with the issues of presentation. While she suggested that more inclusive formats, such as the three-line format that includes the detailed information on original morphemes and grammatical workings is preferable, she also recognised that that requires considerable space and linguistic expertise, and might be more appropriate for the linguistically-oriented versions of conversation analysis rather than for other varieties of discursive research.

In my thesis, I partially followed the above recommendations. When in doubt regarding the translation, I have discussed the issues with my second supervisor, a British scholar who is proficient in Russian. On several occasions, I have also sought advice from my Russian colleagues, without disclosing the particulars of my research for ethical reasons. I analysed the Russian and English transcripts simultaneously to increase the sensitivity and validity of the analysis. I was also more careful with making analytic claim based on English translation: I avoided relying too much on a single utterance, instead taking into account a combination of meaning, sequential placement and various discursive features. I did not use specific proofing procedures, such as back translation, because my concern was with the general meaning of people's talk rather than with the accuracy of translation or closeness of lexical fit (Nurjannah et al., 2014; Su & Parham, 2002). However, where it was essential, I made a note explaining specific subtleties of meaning or grammar. In terms of presentation, I decided to include only the English versions for the sake of space and clarity of the analysis. Although I work with micro-level of discourse, my research is not linguistically oriented *per se*; nor do I possess the necessary linguistic expertise, being a social psychologist by training. Thus, I believe that such translation and transcription approaches are appropriate for this thesis.

Conclusion

My study therefore draws on the perspective of social constructionism and takes an analytic approach of discursive social psychology (Edwards & Potter, 2000). DP places an emphasis on how meanings are constructed in social interactions rather than on the creation of particular psychological models. Being highly empirical and grounded in the data, DP offers useful analytic tools for examining interactional negotiation and management of various interpersonal issues that might appear central to protest. The data consists of interactional semi-structured interviews conducted with protest participants across different locations in Russia. The analysis of the data relies on detailed interview transcripts; it is guided by the focus on the social functions of talk. The analytic process is informed by a number of considerations, such as the importance of context, concern with fine details of talk and analytic attention to the variability of discursive devices.

In the next chapter, I offer first empirical analysis of the data: I use DP approach to explore the ways in which my respondents manage 'being politically interested', after being asked about the change in their political attitudes.

Chapter 3. 'I am now interested': how protesters account for being interested in politics

The aim of this chapter is to explore how people talk about their interest in politics and the political situation in Russia. In line with the call for a different methodological lens on protest discussed in the previous two chapters, my analyses here are informed by an acknowledgement that people can describe things in virtually limitless ways, and that such descriptions are interactional resources for sense-making (Edwards, 1997; Edwards & Potter, 2000). Accepting that accounts and descriptions do pragmatic work allows us to 'bracket off' the questions of whether verbal accounts are evidence of certain mental states and individual cognitive processes (Potter & Edwards, 2013), and focus instead on fine-grained features of how exactly people carry out such pragmatic work, and to what end they put it. In particular, this chapter examines some features of how accounts of becoming interested in politics are organised by protesters in interview talk.

It can be argued that for ordinary people in Russia, admitting political interest might be more problematic than it initially appears. Greene (2012) argues that a decade of political stability and economic development, spanning from 2000 to 2010, was characterised by the decline of political awareness among the general public. Moreover, the tightening of governmental control over civil society and the media in response to the mass protests of 2011-2013 resulted in the narrowing of political opportunities, an increase of threats to the politically active and the appearance of discourses that portrayed political curiosity as deviant (Clément, 2013). Under such circumstances, it is likely that protesters face challenges not only in justifying their actions, but also in providing legitimate reasons as to why they became interested in the domain of the political in the first place. Following that, political interest is a topic worth examining.

Another reason why it might be fruitful to explore how protesters talk about becoming interested in politics stems from the psychological theory of collective movement participation (Klandermans, 1997). Numerous scholars of social protest have observed that before actual protest involvement an individual should recognise that, first, the state of affairs is in some way unsatisfactory and, second, develop a certain worldview

that would make protesting into acceptable behaviour (Smith, Thomas & McGarty, 2014; Tilly & Tarrow, 2007; van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2013). Klandermans (1997) suggests that people who develop such a worldview become a part of ‘mobilisation potential’. This is a ‘reservoir’ of people who share a particular set of values and interests, who are sympathetic to given social movement goals, and who have better chances to be mobilised to take part in a protest (Klandermans & Oegema, 1987, p. 519). A similar idea has been proposed by McCarthy and Zald (1977) who have offered the notion of ‘conscience adherents’. They propose that with respect to social movements, people in society may be categorised into non-adherents (impartial public), adherents (interested and sympathetic towards a social movement) and constituents (direct members of the movement). A social movement develops when people progress from non-adherents to adherents and, finally, to the constituents; an important idea here is that, in order to do that, people have to undergo certain changes in their beliefs and interests. What is evident from both of these models, then, is that the first vital step of becoming a protester has to do with acquiring an interest; however, little empirical attention has been paid to how protesters themselves experience that, and how they describe it in talk.

With regard to the Russian context, some research has pointed to the difficulties in developing such ‘protester-like’ attitudes. For example, Clément et al. (2010) argue that the road from a layperson (*obivatel*) to an activist (*aktivist*) lies in overcoming conformist consciousness. They suggest that it is a difficult process, since ‘conformist consciousness and behaviour are inherently rational and pragmatic’ (p. 40). Clément et al. explain that in the context where it is easier and safer to compromise rather than protest, such as in Russia, people are not motivated to become interested in the political state of affairs in the country, nor do they spend time finding and joining opposition groups. This echoes the words of Greene (2011), who has called Russian society ‘aggressively immobile’. According to Greene, ‘immobile’ here means that lay Russian people are predominantly apolitical and passive; ‘aggressive’ means that such passivity is in fact an active behavioural strategy that people adhere to in an attempt to preserve political and social reality as it is. As such, the safest and most logical focus of interest is on one’s immediate surroundings of work and private life, away from the broader societal and political issues.

Greene claims that as a result, the values of political interest and awareness have been undermined in Russia, and being apolitical has become the key to the preservation of current political status quo. These arguments offer support to the idea that becoming interested in politics is not a straightforward accomplishment and that people who do become interested might have to account for it in some way. Yet again, little empirical research has focused on how people make sense of such experiences, through telling their own stories of how (and if at all) they formed political consciousness in the first place. This chapter intends to fulfil this gap and explore such stories. But rather than taking them as accounts of what ‘really’ happened — or of how the first step in the models I mentioned above ‘really’ occurs — I will analyse them as discursive constructions that are designed to warrant specific versions of events and are informed by certain interactional concerns.

Method

The following analysis relies on the data from the two data collections built around the topic of political interest. First, a set of extracts taken from the beginning of the interviews, where respondents answer a question that invites them to describe their political attitudes (a variation of ‘please tell me a bit about yourself: have you been interested in the socio-political situation in Russia and have your views changed’). Second, a collection of extracts in which respondents talk about their political attitudes without being directly prompted by the interviewer; these also usually come from the beginning of the interviews, but those that started with a different question (‘have you ever been involved in a political party or a social movement?’). Initial analysis revealed that discussions of political interest often revolve around the theme of attitudinal changes, with people specifying that they were *not* interested in the past and giving accounts of what had caused them to become interested. This is perhaps not surprising given that a part of the above-mentioned interview question — ‘have your views changed’ — explicitly orients to it. However, it is how exactly such ‘change’ sequences are organised that is of interest here. In addition, there is also some evidence that the interviewees address the topic of change in their political attitudes even if the question did not specifically solicit

it. The resulting analysis contains a mix of interviewer-driven and more spontaneous accounts of change; the presence of the latter is important as it suggests that accounting for becoming political is a part of participants' own conversational agenda, rather than simply a result of the interviewer asking questions.

To identify the concrete fragments for this chapter, I read through and listened to the collections several times, selected a number of patterned fragments, and translated and transcribed them in detail in accordance with CA conventions. Then I separated the extracts into the three groups, according to the particular 'route' to becoming interested in politics that the respondents recurrently describe: other-related, praxis-related and knowledge-related paths. The chapter is structured in line with these three constructions.

1. 'Thanks to my boyfriend': portraying political interest as fostered by others

I would like to start by examining some features of how the interviewees address the topic of political interest. As I mentioned in the introduction, initial analysis has revealed that speakers tend to discuss this topic with respect to a change in their interests and provide various explanations for such a change. One explanation that is repeatedly given is the influence of another person. For example, in the following extract the respondent implies that he became interested in politics because of the girl he loved. The account is produced in response to the question about whether P1 had been a member of a political party or taken part in a social movement.

Extract 3.1: Protester 1, male, Moscow

- 1 P1 everything started when the girl who I loved very much
2 YL aha
3 P1 got involved with politics (0.5) it was I guess the year 2005
4 YL aha
5 P1 and she (2.2) well spent- just a lot- quite a lot of time at (0.2) the 'Defence' movement
6 headquarters which was the coalition of (.) like (.) young democratic hhh well not exactly

((some lines omitted – he discusses who they were exactly))

7 so um (.) and from that time I started to become interested in politics

The first observation I would like to make is that while the interviewer does not ask about P1's political interest explicitly, the speaker brings this topic up. Specifically, he implies that there has been an attitudinal change, from him being (presumably) not interested to becoming interested in politics. The idea of change is indirectly expressed in the first line, where P1 orients to a turning point ('everything started when'); the object of change is made more explicit when he says 'from that time I started to become interested in politics' (line 7). These formulations make clear that P1 was not interested in politics *initially*, and that he became interested only after a certain point.

Second, the change is constituted through a description of what caused it. Here, P1 explains that the change is related to another person's interests and activities ('the girl who I loved very much [...] got involved with politics ... [she] spent- just a lot- quite a lot of time at (0.2) the 'Defence' movement headquarters', lines 1, 3, 5, 6) and that it happened at a specific point in time ('it was I guess the year 2005', line 3). These descriptions have the following inferential consequences: they indicate that political interest is an explainable matter (that is, P1 has a clear idea of when and why he came to be interested in politics); they imply that a change of attitude happened for a reason and did not just occur by itself; and finally, they suggest that P1 acquired political interest because he was influenced by another person. Formulating interest as the result of external influence plays down a potential assumption that P1 intended to become politically interested; this construction functions to diminish personal agency.

The speaker minimises his personal involvement in other ways too. Recall how he starts his account, saying 'everything started when' (line 1). Two points are important here. First, 'everything' is a rather oblique reference to the phenomenon in question; note that it is not specified as 'interest in politics' until the end of the account (line 7). Second, the formulation does not portray any sense of human agency: it is designed to portray something happening as if by itself, regardless of P1. A similar design has been observed by Wooffitt (1992). He has demonstrated that people who claim to experience paranormal phenomena often avoid explicitly naming such phenomena and describe experiences as

something that happened *to* them. Wooffitt suggests that in so doing, speakers indicate that they did not have any prior knowledge of and interest in the phenomenon, and portray themselves as passive witnesses to ‘out-there’ events; in turn, this diminishes personal agency and establishes the objectivity of their experiences (for a concise summary, see Avery & Antaki, 1997). Coming back to extract 1, P1’s formulation can therefore be taken to suggest that he had no prior stake in becoming interested in politics, and that his interest is a ‘by-product’ of spending time with his politically-active girlfriend.

So, by closely examining P1’s account we can identify two features of talking about political interest. First, political interest is talked about in relative terms, in that it is shown to be absent in the past and present in the future. Second, the change in attitude is explained through reference to another person, which implies that political interest was initiated externally. The design of the account ensures that the hearer can interpret P1’s interest as unintentional. It is also worth noticing that the interviewee brings up the topic of political interest even though the interviewer does not directly ask about it.

The following extract demonstrates what happens when the interviewer explicitly addresses the topic of political interest, by asking whether the interviewee has been interested in the socio-political situation in Russia and how his views have changed³. There, the interviewee talks about being drawn into what he calls a ‘leftist get-together’ (*levaya tusovka*) because of his friend.

Extract 3.2: Protester 39, male, Saint Petersburg

- 1 P39 I wasn’t interested (0.2) I didn’t do (.) anything but basically um (0.2) I was um
2 like a rather unconventional person I mean like subcultures and stuff like that (0.8)
(*(some lines omitted – he talks about types of recruiting, specifically via various networks)*)

³ Interestingly, I have noticed that after the first ten interviews the first interview question changes from ‘can you tell me a bit about yourself, that is, have you ever been involved in a political party or a social movement’ to ‘can you tell me a bit about yourself, that is, have you been interested in a socio-political situation in Russia and have your views changed’ (interview 6 is an exception, as there I ask why the interviewee started to become interested in politics). There are no field notes to support this, but it is possible that I have altered the first question because people were telling me about their political interests and change in political attitudes in response to the question about political party or movement membership.

3 it's just like I (.) did an art exhibition with one (.) girl who is now like um (.) my very close
 4 (0.2) and um (.) she was somehow connected to (.) the leftist get-together (.) I mean she um
 5 was not just somehow connected she was its activist
 6 YL aha
 7 P39 and so we started to socialise (.) gradually I became a part of the get-together and then like
 8 bam (.) um (0.8) after some time I realised that I'm like already um (.) like (.) an activist

In this extract, the respondent tells a story of how he came to be interested in politics. What is immediately noticeable is that the story has similar features to that in extract 1: the interviewee orients to a change in political interest from past to present and makes a reference to a politically-interested other. However, P39's account is somewhat more detailed: for example, he explicitly states that he was not interested in the past ('I wasn't interested (0.2) I didn't do (.) anything', line 1) and asserts a clearly contrasting attitude in the present. The latter is done by claiming membership in the 'activist' category, which implies being interested in politics ('I realised that I'm like already um (.) like (.) an activist', line 8). Because of these fine details and for the purpose of analysis, we can look at P39's account as having three 'sections'⁴: 1) referencing initial lack of interest; 2) describing the events that led to a change; 3) orienting to the presence of interest.

I am specifically interested in the second (lines 3-7) and third 'sections' (line 8) here, because they give an insight into a certain interactional concern that the speaker deals with while addressing the topic of political interest. In line 3, P39 starts to describe the events that led to the change of his interest: he was 'just' doing an 'art exhibition with one (.) girl'. The particle 'just' appears to suggest that P39 did not intentionally seek contact with the girl; it 'just' so happened that they were doing an exhibition together. Lack of personal intent is also displayed in line 7, where the interviewee describes how he and the girl 'started to socialise' (*stali obshyat'sya*) and he 'gradually [...] became a part of the get-together'. This formulation indicates that P39's interaction with the girl was social in nature; '*obshyat'sya*' signals neutrality and the lack of specific commitment, thereby reinforcing the inference that P39 became a member of the activist group not on

⁴ I use quotation marks for the word 'section' to make clear that this is a purely analytic construct for the ease of the analysis.

purpose but as a result of being influenced through a continuous social contact. Furthermore, the repair in lines 4-5 does delicate inferential work of managing the notion of personal agency. When P39 characterises the girl with respect to her political interests, he first says ‘she was somehow connected to (.) the leftist get-together’ (line 4), but then repairs it by saying ‘I mean she um (0.8) was not just somehow connected, she was its activist’ (lines 4-5). Before the repair, the description is vague and non-specific; it is similar to the formulation ‘everything started’ from extract 1 in that it withholds the particularities. As such, it can be seen as an example of a ‘not naming’ strategy: by not specifying that the girl was politically active at the outset, P39 makes a hearable inference that he either did not know that or that it is not important to him. The term ‘get-together’ (*tusovka*) substantiates this by displaying P39’s lack of interest. In theory, any informal assembly of people can be described as ‘tusovka’: using it rather than, say, the name of a party or an organisation, P39 implies that he does not care about the specific details of the girl’s affiliation. To bring these observations together, it seems that in describing the circumstances that resulted in his becoming an activist, the speaker has a practical task of warding off imputations of intent.

An additional resource for accomplishing this task is seen in the third ‘section’, where the interviewee suggests that the change in his interests happened without his conscious control. Note how being an activist is portrayed by P39 as sudden and clearly unanticipated recognition, by using emphatic ‘bam’: ‘and then like bam (.) um (0.8) after some time I realised that I’m like already um (.) like an activist’ (lines 7-8). Here, P39’s activist belonging is a fact of reality that he is not aware of for some time. In turn, this implies that it was neither a deliberate act nor an important achievement, and happened of its own accord.

So, the design of P39’s account clearly indicates that acquiring an interest was not intentional for him: he did not seek contact with the girl, he did not know or care that she was an activist, and he was not aware of being influenced by the girl and of becoming an activist himself. These impersonal claims are similar to the ones we have seen in extract 1, which suggests that avoiding agency attributions is a relevant feature of both spontaneous and solicited stories about becoming political.

The following two extracts demonstrate another common feature of explanations that draw on the influence of another person: accounting for why the speakers were not interested in politics in the first place. The respondents — young women from Moscow — are asked whether they have been interested in the political situation in Russia and whether their views have changed.

Extract 3.3: Protester 42, female, Moscow

- 1 P42 on the whole I (.) was mainly not that interested in politics (.) well
 2 because- maybe because of the age maybe because (.) well like for some reason
 3 it's not really common to be interested in politics here
 4 YL mmhm
 5 P42 and um everything started um (.) on the fifth of December (.) eleventh year
 6 right then (.) there were elections it should have happened and um (.)
 7 it was obviously clear that well >everything will be rigged< and my girlfriend
 8 told me *so (0.2) there will be a protest (.) let's go*
((describes going to the protest and says that after that she became interested))

Extract 3.4: Protester 36, female, Moscow

- 1 P36 it's been roughly one and a half years since I'm really (.) like (.) interested
 2 and by and large I read watch and follow all that
 3 well (.) before I always thought that basically politics is not my department
 4 well (.) it's like (0.5) nothing can be changed and it's all so dirty and stuff
 5 so basically it all was (.) like too difficult (0.2)
 6 but thanks to my boyfriend who is like active (.) he was telling me stuff
 7 from time to time and I was like [*aha aha*
 8 YL [mmhm
 9 P36 (0.2) so and then (.) when (.) ah↑ it happened when there were (0.4) elections (.) like
 10 on the fourth of December after which-
 11 YL in 2011?
 12 P36 yes yes yes everything started um then
((describes how her boyfriend joined the protest and she became active after him))

The speakers do not only orient to why their attitudes have changed, but also give reasons for not being interested in politics in the past. The speaker in extract 3 says ‘I (.) was mainly not that interested in politics’ (line 1) and provides two possible explanations: being young (‘maybe because of the age’, line 2; at the moment of the interview the speaker is 22 years old, so here the reference to ‘age’ is likely to be heard as ‘young age’) and being a member of the Russian culture (‘maybe because (.) well like for some reason it’s not really common to be interested in politics here’, lines 2-3). Together, these explanations suggest that P42 was uninterested due to objective circumstances and not for subjective or personal reasons. This can be seen as a normalising strategy: through identifying practical obstacles to becoming interested, P42 makes her past attitude understandable and hence more warranted.

An additional observation here is that the second explanation is softened with ‘well’, ‘for some reason’ and ‘not really common’ (lines 2-3), resulting in a more qualified version of the statement. Despite somewhat weakening the claim, these softeners make it less susceptible to challenges and hence interactionally more robust (Edwards, 2000). It is worth remembering here that the interviewer is Russian herself and is expected to have similar knowledge to P42 of the Russian culture and norms. Because of this, she might challenge a more universalising statement. P42’s qualified description reduces the probability of such a challenge through adding a degree of uncertainty and making the claim more difficult to counter.

In extract 4, the respondent similarly addresses the topic of the previous lack of interest. She explains that ‘before’ she ‘always thought that basically politics is not my department’ (line 3). In so doing, she uses temporal adverb ‘always’, which is an example of what Pomerantz (1986) has called ‘extreme case formulations’ (ECFs). P36 uses a number of other extreme case formulations, in listing details of her past belief in line 4 (ECFs here are ‘*nothing* can be changed’ and ‘it’s *all* so dirty’) and in the upshot in line 5 (‘it *all* was too difficult’). Extreme case formulations fulfil various functions in talk; for example, they defend formulations against challenges, help to strengthen and therefore justify claims and act as devices for normalising people’s actions (Edwards, 1994, 1995;

Hutchby, 1992). ECFs in the target data perform similar work: they help P36 to portray her past attitude as longstanding (she *always* had it) and exhaustively negative (as *all* the politics were dirty and difficult for her). This suggests that her belief could not have been easily dismissed and makes her past lack of interest convincing and justified.

So both speakers design their explanations to reveal that their previous inattention to politics was a normal reaction under the circumstances. That such normalising explanations are being offered might suggest that lack of political interest is accountable matter for the participants. This raises an interesting point insofar as the speakers seem to feel the need to give an explanation both for being politically interested now *and* politically unconcerned in the past.

In terms of addressing the change of political interest, extracts 3 and 4 show similar patterns to the two earlier extracts. First, both speakers indicate that there was a change in their attitudes. P42 says ‘I (.) was mainly not that interested in politics’ (3:1); the past tense here implies that her present attitude is different. P36 achieves a similar effect when she says ‘it’s been roughly one and a half years since I’m really (.) like (.) interested’ (4:1), which presupposes that her interest has developed.

Second, interviewees point to other people in such a way as to imply that they were influenced by these people. P42 makes clear that it was her girlfriend who invited her to join the demonstration. Note the words the girlfriend is reported saying: ‘*so (0.2) there will be a protest (.) let’s go*’ (3:8). Here, the invitation is designed to be heard as a statement rather than a suggestion, as if the girlfriend had already assumed that P42 would join her. Due to such design, the fact of influence becomes more pronounced. As the interviewee later claims that she became interested in politics after that particular demonstration, the girlfriend is seen as indirectly soliciting this interest. In a more explicit way, P36 points to the impact from her boyfriend (‘but thanks to my boyfriend who is like active’, 4:6). She also implies that their conversations played a role in fostering her interest (‘he was telling me stuff from time to time and I was like [*aha aha*]’, 4:6-7).

The third similarity to extracts 1 and 2 is the use of formulations that diminish personal agency and ‘not naming’ formulations. Both P42 and P36 use the expression ‘everything started’ (3:5; 4:12); as I discussed in the analysis of extract 1 above, such

generic descriptions are resources for rejecting the inference that political interest was a product of interviewees' intention or planning. The speaker in extract 4 produces two other oblique references, in line 6 ('he was telling me *stuff*') and in line 9 ('*it* happened'), which strengthen the impression that P36 was not specifically focused on the political side of information and events. She also uses an exclamation ('ah↑', line 9) that conveys the suddenness of change and reduces her personal involvement in it.

The final observation I would like to make in this section concerns the nature of the people that interviewees orient to. The speaker in extract 1 describes the other as 'the girl who I loved very much' (1:1). The speaker in extract 2 shows that the girl he met became his close friend ('girl who is now like um (.) my very close friend ', 2:3). Speakers in extract 3 and 4 similarly refer to people who are seen as being close to them: P42 talks about her 'girlfriend' (3:7) and P36 talks about her 'boyfriend' (4:6). In all four extracts, then, the others are portrayed as *significant* others, people we trust and listen to (see Potter, 1996, for a discussion how the 'friend' category implies feelings of loyalty and support). Characterising these people as significant makes it more natural for respondents to share similar interests with them, which normalises the fact of being influenced. As such, these constructions protect speakers from the potentially problematic assumption that acquired interest is not authentic because it is 'forced' by others (Widdicombe & Wooffitt, 1995, discuss this issue in the context of subcultural affiliation). Hence, interviewees use the design of their stories as a resource to allow the hearer to conclude that becoming politically interested was an (unintended) consequence of their friends and loved ones becoming politically active.

In the next section I will look at another way in which my respondents address the topic of political interest and justify the change in their attitudes.

2. 'I remember a key moment': becoming political after experiencing a problematic situation

This section looks at how protesters explain their political attitudes in the context of experiencing some sort of injustice. In the following two extracts, the interviewees point to the change of attitude and give an account of the specific circumstances that occasioned it. Extract 5 is an example of a more spontaneous account: it is produced in reply to the question about how the interviewee became involved with a citizen initiative movement 'Tiger' (*Tigr - tovarishestvo iniciativnih gragdan Rossii*). In extract 6, the account of change is solicited by the interviewer, who asks whether the interviewee's attitudes to the political situation in Russia have changed. While the protagonists are different — the speaker in extract 5 talks about himself and the interviewee in extract 6 tells a story about his friend — the design of the two accounts is very similar, which justifies looking at the extracts together.

Extract 3.5: Protester 2, male, Moscow

- 1 P2 I remember that moment the key moment (.) so back then (.) I didn't follow like politics
2 I understood well that it's nothing good in there
3 YL mmhm
4 P2 well (.) and then I (.) was just watching (0.5) it was at the editorial office there was a TV
5 and I was watching (.) this Putin's Federal Assembly speech and I (0.2) for the first time
6 I saw how he handles the numbers, how he manipulates them (.) and how much he basic-
7 um (.) well basically how much he lies (.)
8 YL mmhm
9 P2 he lied from the podium (.) just playing with numbers, playing with some facts (0.2)
10 faking his work (.) at that I just felt I understood what he was doing (.)
11 YL mmhm
12 P2 so (0.2) and it insulted me somewhat I don't like when I'm lied to (.)
13 YL mmhm mmhm
14 P2 moreover when (.) I'm lied to by the man I used to trust
15 YL mmhm
16 P2 and lied to by the man who is entrusted with the whole country

- 17 YL mmhm mmhm
 18 P2 so (.) and I understood that (.) basically (0.2) Vova should not be (0.5) £ at the helm £

Extract 3.6: Protester 19, male, Saint Petersburg.

The interviewee is recounting how he came to understand that legal mechanisms in Russia do not work and tells the following story as an example.

- 1 P19 my friend (0.5) good acquaintance, basically (.) he used to be a completely apolitical man
 2 YL mmhm
 3 P19 he is very like (.) very clever he has three higher education degrees
 4 YL mmhm
 5 P19 well he's a believer (.) an orthodox and he was just walking um (0.5) *((his mobile rings))*
 6 um and he saw them cutting um trees at the um cemetery (.) it means like the cemetery
 7 was a building site (.) and because he's a believer for him all these sacred places are very
 8 like important right↑
 9 YL aha
 10 P19 and he (.) basically (.) on his own he started (.) um writing to various authorities (.) but
 11 YL mmhm
 12 P19 basically (.) because everything was bought and paid for, he was naturally turned down
 13 and they started to kick him around (.) police kicked him to- to like (.) local inspectors
 14 and to whatnot (.) they kicked him back to police, he found some d- deputy at some (0.8)
 15 local level (.) of some like legislative assembly who wrote all the necessary demands (.)
 16 but that was the end of it all because apart from writing demands they can't do anything
 17 YL mmhm mmhm
 18 P19 and so (.) and he himself became an active pr- protester although basically
 19 he was like (.) completely (.) apolitical

Observe that both speakers employ the same three-part format as the speakers from the previous section. First, they point to the initial lack of political interest ('back then (.) I didn't follow like politics', 5:1; 'he used to be a completely apolitical man', 6:1). Second, they describe the events that led to a change. Third, they finish with formulations that imply the presence of interest: P2 says 'and I understood that (.) basically (0.2) Vova should not be (0.5) £ at the helm £' (5:18) and P19 says 'and he himself became an active pr- protester' (6:18). P2's formulation makes clear that he has acquired a specific political

stance against Putin and humorously suggests a certain familiarity with the world of politics, through using the short form of Putin's name, 'Vova'. P19's formulation implies that his acquaintance became an activist, a status that presupposes having a degree of political interest. In addition, the speaker in extract 5 accounts for not being concerned with politics in the past. Similar to the interviewee from extract 4, he uses extreme case formulation 'nothing' to strengthen his claim that he was not interested because he thought that politics were absolutely worthless ('I understood well that it's nothing good in there', line 2). Given such an attitude, his lack of concern is hearable as legitimate.

While the general format of the accounts, both here and in section one, is similar, the events that led to a change are described in a notably different way. Here, respondents explain the change of perspective by recalling specific negative experiences they had. P2 invokes a memory of seeing Vladimir Putin on TV and realising his lies. He orients to the importance of this experience by positioning it as 'the key moment' (line 1). P19 describes how his acquaintance failed to stop the demolition of the cemetery, a story which also substantiates the interviewee's claim of his own disillusionment with the power of legal mechanisms in Russia. These experiences, due to their sequential positioning between the claims of no interest and assertions of interest, are hearable as responsible for bringing about attitudinal change.

Let us explore how the speakers narrate their experiences in more detail. An important point to make is that these narratives seem to be designed in a particular way. In both extracts, the speakers formulate what they were doing before they experienced the situation that made them change their attitude to politics. P2 describes this as 'I (.) was just watching [...] and I (0.2) for the first time I saw' (5:4-6) and P19 reports that his acquaintance 'was just walking [...] and he saw' (6:5-6). There are therefore two parts to the telling: the part where the interviewees describe how they came to witness a situation (settings) and the part where they describe the situation itself.

The actions formulated in the settings part — watching TV and walking — are discernibly neutral and mundane. This impression is reinforced by introducing them with 'just', the particle that minimises the significance of actions (Lee, 1987). By using it, interviewees provide for the ordinary character of their actions and imply that their

witnessing was not preceded by a prior interest in the situation. In addition to ‘just’, the speakers display the lack of a pre-existing stake in other ways. For example, the speaker in extract 5 explains that he was at an office with a television when he saw Vladimir Putin’s Federal Assembly speech (‘it was at the editorial office there was a TV and I was watching’, lines 4-5). The emphasis on the place highlights the fact that P2 was (presumably) at work, a setting where he perhaps had less say in what to watch (in contrast to, for example, his home). This tentatively works up the impression that P2 simply *happened* to see the speech. In extract 6, the interviewee initially describes what his acquaintance saw as ‘them cutting um trees at the um cemetery’ (line 6). This is a neutral description that sets the scene but does not imply a wrongdoing. The significance of ‘cutting trees’ — turning the cemetery into a ‘building site’ (line 7) — is explained later and is thus hearable as an afterthought. Organised in that way, the descriptions act as a resource for portraying the protagonist of the story as initially unsuspecting and having no predisposition to blame or accuse. It is noteworthy, then, that both speakers work towards the inference that the situation that brought about political interest was witnessed unintentionally, with little personal input.

These observations echo the points made by Wooffitt (1992) in his study of people talking about paranormal experiences. He has noticed that paranormal experience tellings tend to follow a specific format, ‘I was just doing X ... when Y’, where a fact of witnessing a paranormal phenomenon (the ‘Y’ component) is reported by the speakers together with descriptions of mundane things they were doing at the time it happened (the ‘X’ component). Wooffitt suggested that such format attends to a set of local interactional issues. In particular, it enables a speaker to appear normal and hence trustworthy in the face of the prevailing scepticism regarding witnessing anomalous events, by implying that she or he just happened to be a witness of something extraordinary with no prior interest or desire to see it. Following this argument, it might be suggested that the speakers in my interviews tackle a similar task: by attending to the unintentional character of witnessing, they warrant the lack of pre-existing stake.

Why this task might be important for the speakers will become evident after the examination of the second, ‘Y’ part of experience telling. In this part, the interviewees

design their formulations so that the events that took place are seen as problematic and as a ‘trigger’ for turning political.

In extract 5, the interviewee uses the practice of listing to index the situation he saw as a problem. In lines 6-7, he formulates a three-part list, introducing each item with ‘how’: 1) ‘I saw how he handles the numbers’; 2) ‘how he manipulates them’; 3) ‘how much he basic- um (.) well basically how much he lies’. The three-part structure of lists has been described as an interactional resource for exemplifying common qualities and indexing general characteristics of things (Jefferson, 1990; Sacks, 1992, Fall 1971, lecture 14). In extract 5, the three components strongly suggest that there is a problem with Putin’s conduct. This suggestion is reinforced through a further list of his wrongdoings (‘he lied from the podium (.) just playing with numbers, playing with some facts (0.2) faking his work’, lines 9-10). Furthermore, P2 makes clear that this problematic situation provoked a strong reaction from him (‘it insulted me’, line 12), thereby occasioning it as a ‘trigger’ for becoming attentive to politics and adopting an anti-Putin stance. His reaction is warranted, first, on the grounds of personal dislike (‘I don’t like when I’m lied to’, line 12), and second, by mobilising the inferences of righteous anger over the betrayed trust (‘I’m lied to by the man I used to trust [...] by the man who is entrusted with the whole country’, lines 14, 16).

In extract 6, the situation is constructed as problematic on two levels. First, there is a personal level of the protagonist, for whom the demolition of the cemetery is shown to be an issue due to his religious beliefs (‘because he’s a believer for him all these sacred places are very like important’, lines 7-8). Note that this claim is made convincing by being worked up as a consensus between the interviewee, who requests it with ‘right↑’ (line 8) and the interviewer, who corroborates it with ‘aha’ (line 9). Second, P19 makes relevant a more generic issue, through describing how the protagonist was treated by the ‘various authorities’. In lines 12-14, the account resembles a vicious circle where the authorities constantly shift responsibility to one another (police to inspectors and back to police). The problematic character of their actions is conveyed through the choice of words (‘kick(ed) around’ is used three times) and through explicit orientation to corruption (‘because everything was bought and paid for’, line 12). Indeed, P19 presents the situation

to be so bad that even when the protagonist finds a willing deputy, he still has no actual power to help ('apart from writing demands they can't do anything', line 16). By highlighting the irresponsibility of the authorities, P19 makes the protagonist's decision to take the matters into his own hands understandable and hence justified.

To bring the above observations together, in the 'X' part, the speakers justify unintentional character of witnessing, and in the 'Y' part they portray the witnessed situation as problematic and triggering acquisition of political interest. In effect, the credibility of the second part (and, by implication, the acquisition of political interest itself) is substantiated by the first part: assertions of initial neutrality and lack of interest strengthen the 'objectively' problematic character of the witnessed situations, thus warranting the decisions to become politically involved.

The following extract shows a variation on the 'I was just doing X ... when Y' format. In common with extracts 5 and 6, it deals with arguments around becoming politically active through experiencing a problematic situation. The interviewee responds to the question 'Have you been interested in political situation in Russia and have your views changed'.

Extract 3.7: Protester 18, male, Saint Petersburg

- 1 P18 I was absolutely passive towards all things um (0.2) finished uh (.) the university
- 2 started to work (.) basically (.) when I managed to advance my career, well
- 3 I was a CEO of um (.) a building firm
- 4 YL mmhm
- 5 P18 delivered supplies for project units um basically I didn't ca(re) I wasn't married I had
- 6 like (.) I had money everything friends parties basically well (.) I lived and enjoyed life
- 7 YL mmhm
- 8 P18 um (0.8) and the f-first thing in my life that influenced me was I guess buying a car
 ((some lines omitted – he discusses his second car which was a right-hand drive))
- 9 I began to drive and a couple of times I was um stopped by the police inspectors
- 10 and they charged me with some driving offence
- 11 YL mmhm
- 12 P18 and I was like (.) *bugger*↑ *it's been like seven years since I've looked into the highway*

13 *code maybe something has changed* came home looked not really everything's correct
 14 YL mmhm
 15 P18 I mean I realised that I was conned (.) so I began (.) to read the highway code carefully
 16 became hooked on the law forum
 17 YL mmhm
 18 P18 not just like reading but I began to grasp the rules quite well
 19 YL mmhm
 20 P18 um and so (.) well the f-first thing >let's say< that drove me to become involved
 21 with protest activity was basically (.) contact with the road police inspectors

In a similar fashion to the analysis above, let us consider the design of P18's account. The first thing to notice is that the interviewee answers the question about his political interests by building a case for being extremely passive in the past. He says 'I was absolutely passive towards all things' (line 1): given the question, 'passive' is hearable as 'politically passive', while the two extreme case formulations ('absolutely' and 'all') maximise the degree of indifference. See also how, similarly to the speakers in extracts 3, 4 and 5, P18 attends to past lack of interest by giving an account of his life *before* he had bought a car. He describes his success in work (lines 2-5) where he has achieved the rank of a 'CEO of um (.) a building firm' (line 3), and points to the benefits of his bachelor life ('I had money everything friends parties', line 6). Such descriptions convey the image of an active man about town who 'lived and enjoyed life' (line 6), thereby furnishing the impression that P18 did not have reasons to be interested in politics.

Second, the interviewee ties his political awakening ('the f-first thing in my life that influenced me') to a specific event — 'buying a car' (line 8). This formulation provides a setting for the subsequent experience report. Another setting component, which is more intimately tied to the character of the experience, is in lines 9-10. There, P18 says 'I began to drive and a couple of times I was um stopped by the police inspectors and they charged me with some driving offence'. This description gives an insight into a specific aspect of driving that made an impact on P18 — contact with the road police. Importantly, however, this formulation is designedly vague and neutral. It gives only a general idea about how many times P18 was stopped ('a couple of times') and about the character of

offence ('some driving offence'). In effect, P18 avoids giving the impression that being stopped and charged is something unfair or out of ordinary.

Third, the speaker describes his actual experience by using a two-part format similar to 'I was doing X ... when Y'. In particular, note how he reports his initial reaction to being stopped by the police by doing active voicing (Wooffitt, 1992). Here, P18 includes a section which is hearable as a quoted speech, due to its being introduced with 'and I was like' and a shift in intonation: 'and I was like (.) *bugger↑ it's been like seven years since I've looked into the highway code maybe something has changed*' (lines 12-13). In so doing, the interviewee shows that he made a 'normal' first assumption about what had taken place: his lack of attention to the rules resulted in genuine charges against him. This in turn presents the evidence of his initial trust in police actions and lack of suspicion. This part bears similarity to the first part of the format 'at first I thought X ... but then I realised Y' discussed by Jefferson (2004a). Jefferson has noticed that the 'X' component presents an ordinary, expectable alternative to the event that is presented in the 'Y' part, and in so doing strengthens the impression that the realised Y event is non-normative and problematic. In the target data, P18's initial thought offsets the subsequent truth realisation: after determining that he was right (line 13) P18 becomes legitimately convinced that the charge is, in fact, an act of police deceit (line 15). Being deceived, especially by the police, is by itself commonsensically troublesome; however, P18 rhetorically multiplies this effect by juxtaposing the description of reality with his first impression of it. Indeed, Jefferson has argued that the format 'at first I thought ... but then I realised' is particularly effective to imply 'that the wrong 'first thought' should have been right' (p. 140), thereby displaying the in-principle correctness of X and the in-principle wrongness of Y.

As such, P18's formulation of his experience has a similar function to the formulations of unintentional witnessing done by speakers in extracts 5 and 6: it builds up 'objectively' problematic nature of the experience and warrants its status as a trigger for turning political. The fact that P18 was deceived by the police, the people he was inclined to trust initially, acts as a 'natural' trigger for change: it 'drives' him into action, such as reading 'highway code more carefully' (line 15), becoming 'hooked on the law forum'

(line 16) and, ultimately, becoming ‘involved with protest activity’ (lines 20-21). By using the expression ‘drove me’ that orients to the somewhat forced nature of change, P18 reinforces his claim that the acquisition of political interest was an unintended product of experiencing a problematic situation.

In the third section of the analysis, I will explore a final pattern for addressing the topic of political interest that is tied to acquisition of knowledge.

3. ‘Because you already understand’: acquiring political interest as a result of learning

In this section I am going to look at the collection of extracts in which interviewees address the topic of political interest with respect to learning and knowledge acquisition. The opening extract features a response to the question about what prompted the interviewee to become interested in politics and protest. There, the speaker makes an argument about developing his theoretical understanding of the current situation.

Extract 3.8: Protester 6, male, Moscow

- | | | |
|----|----|--|
| 1 | P6 | it was Navalny’s blog of course and then (.) step by step by step by step |
| 2 | | and um it’s been perhaps two years already (.) before this I was (.) rather apolitical |
| 3 | YL | mmhm |
| 4 | P6 | and gradually it started to develop I became interested started reading here and there (.) |
| 5 | | um I mean now I don’t watch TV at all |
| 6 | YL | mmhm |
| 7 | P6 | like I only watch 2x2 (0.2) like Nat- National Geographic channel |
| 8 | YL | mmhm |
| 9 | P6 | that’s all yeah (.) Channel One and Russia 1 are both <i>((unintelligible))</i> |
| 10 | YL | mmhm |
| 11 | P6 | so all (.) news is on the Internet and that’s why (.) now I watch them more and more and |
| 12 | | <u>basically</u> um (0.8) like I (.) don’t have reasons not to trust like Echo of Moscow website |
| 13 | YL | mmhm |
| 14 | P6 | and their journalists yeah↑ [and even Navalny for example (.) |

15 YL [mmhm mmhm
 16 P6 um although my attitude to him is like (0.2) not fanatical (.) yeah↑
 17 YL mmhm
 18 (0.5)
 19 P6 something like that
 20 YL mmhm and was there a moment (.) well like you said when (0.2) or some situation (.)
 21 that forced you to start reading Navalny's blog or um (.) something like that
 22 P6 frankly I don't remember (0.2) I mean there's no click (.) like bang an- and I see the light
 23 YL mmhm mmhm so you didn't [have that
 24 P6 [it was step by step by step
 25 YL mmhm mmhm
 26 P6 then I started to draw parallels make connections and I understood- (.) well I began to
 27 understand and to get into it

This account is formulated to describe a change in the interviewee's political attitudes, from being 'rather apolitical' (line 2) to the point where P6 'became interested' (line 4). It is worth noting that while the general structure of the account resembles the extracts analysed above — it has orientation to past/present contrasting attitudes and description of the circumstances in which the speaker developed an interest — it has two characteristic features that I would like to focus on.

First, the interviewee orients to the source of influence which is markedly different from politically-interested relevant others and from personal contact with problematic situation. P6 says 'it was Navalny's blog of course' (line 1), referring to the popular online site created by the Russian lawyer-turned-unofficial opposition leader Alexei Navalny. Following a blog presupposes reading and learning about certain events; through this 'setting' formulation the interviewee indicates that the change in his political position is somehow connected to the acquisition of information. Note also that this source of information is not portrayed as accidental. By following the claim in line 1 with 'of course', P6 displays his awareness of its normatively prescribed character. It is not that he just happened to read the blog and become interested; rather, P6 recognises reading it as an expected 'route' to becoming interested in political matters. In addition, this formulation helps to portray the blog as a credible source of information.

The speaker also suggests that he uses other sources of information ('started reading here and there', line 5), and does credibility work around these. For example, P6 denounces the role of information from the TV. He first claims that he does not 'watch TV at all' (line 5); however, ECF 'at all' makes this claim absolute and hence factually brittle (Edwards, 2000), so he softens it by making an exception and saying 'I only watch 2x2 (0.2) like Nat- National Geographic channel' (line 7; 2x2 is a Russian entertainment TV channel). It is not clear what he says in line 10, but it is likely that he additionally denies the trustworthiness of news-related information, as he follows it with the claim that 'all the news is on the Internet' (line 11). It is worth noting here that in Russia, the majority of the main TV channels are owned and controlled by the state, which often makes them into tools of propaganda rather than sources of reliable news (Pomerantsev, 2015). Because of this, disdain for TV is a culturally-shared notion, especially among protest-minded people who tend to refer to it as the 'zombie box' (*zomboyaschik*). The interviewee's claim of not taking information from TV can be seen to draw on such a notion, thus acting as a warrant for the reliability of his sources.

Moreover, P6 constructs the Internet sources as trustworthy, by highlighting the absence of evidence to suggest otherwise. Conventionally, the reliability of the Internet sources can be rather questionable; by saying 'I (.) don't have reasons not to trust like Echo of Moscow website [...] and their journalists' (lines 12, 14) the interviewee attends to this issue and dispels it. Arguably, his formulation is weaker than saying 'I *do* have reasons to trust'; however, being so, it enables the speaker to additionally highlight his caution in selecting the sources of information. His cautious and critical stance is further grounded in line 16, where he says 'my attitude to [Navalny] is like (0.2) not fanatical'. It has the effect of portraying P6 as unbiased, thereby implying that he does not blindly believe everything he learns, even from Navalny's blog.

Another notable feature of the extract is the emphasis on the progressive character of learning. In particular, it is done via the expression 'step by step by step by step' in line 1, and again in line 24 ('it was step by step by step'); by using repetition P6 conveys the feeling of continuous progress towards his current state. He also explicitly says that the development took place 'gradually' (line 4). On a number of occasions, the speaker gives

the impression that his political stance is still in the making, by using such expressions as ‘started to develop’ and ‘started reading’ (line 4), ‘watch them more and more’ (line 11) and ‘started to draw parallels’ (line 26). The repair in line 26, where ‘I understood’, an expression that indexes accomplished character of an action, is changed to ‘began to understand’, and expression that indexes the continuous character, further demonstrates P6’s sensitivity to maintaining the focus on a process rather than a fact of becoming political.

Furthermore, the interviewee actively resists the impression that a particular occurrence made him interested. He does this, first, by dismissing the interviewer’s question about specific ‘moment’ or ‘some situation’ (lines 20-21) as unimportant (‘frankly I don’t remember’, line 22). Second, he explicitly rejects experiencing abrupt change when he says ‘there’s no click (.) like bang an- and I see the light’ (line 22). Note how this latter formulation is different from the realisation of political interest conveyed in extracts 2 and 4 (‘bam [...] I’m like already um (.) like (.) an activist’, 2:8; ‘ah↑ it happened’, 4:9). In those extracts, we have seen how the speakers used such formulations to reduce the degree of subjective involvement; what P6 does here is the opposite in a way. His descriptions imply that he was aware of the gradual changes of his political position, in turn inviting inferences that he was more subjectively involved in becoming political. There are indeed some impersonal and oblique references in this extract, for instance ‘it started to develop’ (line 4) and ‘it was step by step’ (line 24), which do somewhat downplay P6’s intentions. However, it is also notable that he finishes his account with a formulation that testifies to his active involvement: whatever conclusions he comes to are portrayed as products of P6’s own analytic considerations, a result of his starting to ‘draw parallels make connections’ (line 26).

Hence in extract 8, the interviewee portrays becoming politically interested as a result of gradually acquiring information from a variety of credible sources. The following two extracts give further examples of such a strategy; additionally, they demonstrate that the process of knowledge acquisition itself can become an accountable matter for the participants. The extracts are produced in response to the question ‘have you been interested in a socio-political situation in Russia and have your views changed’.

Extract 3.9: Protester 33, female, Volgograd

- 1 P33 I've been studying political science for four years now
2 YL mmhm
3 P33 I mean um (0.2) of course I started not because I was £ that much interested in politics £
4 I started because I (0.2) liked the way the lecturer was presenting information about
5 YL mmhm
6 P33 that academic subject, he said that it was (0.2) interesting (.)
7 YL mmhm
8 P33 like *you will be interacting with such and such* and so on um (0.5) basically my views
9 have changed drastically because when you start to learn all the tricks of the trade↑ (0.5)
10 YL mmhm
11 P33 of this (0.2) area (.) you start to understand so much (0.5) and let's say that
12 while in the beginning I basically (0.2) didn't care about what was going on in politics
*((some lines omitted – she describes how she was trying to convince her mother to vote
for Dmitry Medvedev because she was advised to vote for him by her school teachers))*
13 P33 and now (.) well because you already understand your attitude is more critical somehow
14 YL mmhm
15 P33 to all of it (.) that's why (0.5) basically I am now interested in politics

Extract 3.10: Protester 24, female, Saint Petersburg

- 1 P24 I was completely (.) young green (.) it was during the second year of my Journalism
2 degree (.) I wanted to work everywhere I wanted to learn as much as possible and so on
3 YL mmhm
4 P24 and (.) by a twist of fate I got into the Echo of Moscow (.) Saint Petersburg branch (0.4)
5 I'm not sure (.) if I need to £ mention it hhh £
6 YL £ well hhh (0.2) mmhm
7 P24 but well (.) back then it was around (.) 8 years ago I (.) started (0.2) to understand what's
8 happening (.) in the city and consequently what's happening in the country
9 well (.) of course I wasn't like (.) this small girl who didn't know a thing about what was
10 happening but my knowledge (.) certainly (.) became broader
11 YL mmhm

12 P24 about what's hap- what's really happening (.) I mean (0.2) what's not being written about
 13 what's not being talked about um (.) what the civil servants talk about behind the scenes
 14 YL mmhm
 15 P24 some (.) high-ranking officials um (.) businessmen (.) deputies (.)
 16 well I mean it all became closer to my heart

As in all the extracts we have seen, the respondents here point to, and account for, the change in their interests. In extract 9, the interviewee constructs a temporal narrative of change by saying 'while in the beginning I basically (0.2) didn't care about what was going on in politics [...] I am now interested in politics' (lines 12, 15). The speaker in extract 10 uses the past tense to produce a self-description ('I was completely (.) young green', line 1). It presents her as naive and having insufficient knowledge of the socio-political situation. Although this self-description is then modified by the speaker when she says 'of course I wasn't like (.) this small girl who didn't know a thing about what was happening' (lines 9-10), her understanding is still hearable as initially not being broad enough. The interviewee's later claim, 'it all became closer to my heart' (line 16), suggests that with time P24 developed a deeper interest and concern with socio-political matters.

Accounting for such attitudinal changes, both speakers produce setting components that display the relevance of their professional identities. P33 says 'I've been studying political science for four years now' (9:1), and P24 describes how, being a student of journalism ('it was during the second year of my Journalism degree', 10:1-2) she started to work at the radio station ('I got into the Echo of Moscow⁵ (.) Saint Petersburg branch' (10:4). The setting formulations do two kinds of inferential work. First, they suggest that the speakers' political interests (the topic occasioned by the interviewer's question) are in some way related to the development of their professional identities, a student of politics (P33) and a student of journalism working at a radio station (P24). Furthermore, the formulations allow the speakers to discursively link the fact of change to the processes of learning and knowledge acquisition, by invoking student and professional categories. In particular, the speaker in extract 9 describes her newly acquired

⁵ The Echo of Moscow (*Ekho Moskvy*) is a Russian pro-liberal radio station.

political interest to be the result of increased understanding due to learning ‘all the tricks of the trade’ (line 9). Similarly, P24 reports that her understanding became better after she started working at the radio station: ‘I (.) started (0.2) to understand what’s happening (.) in the city and consequently what’s happening in the country’ (10:7-8). Importantly, she talks about learning information that is not available to ordinary people, ‘what’s not being written about what’s not being talked about’ (lines 12-13). Such information, she claims, is known only by the upper echelons of society who discuss it in private (line 15). Because P24 knows it, she is hearable as an insider, privy to big secrets. Such ‘in the know’ identity emphasises the degree of her understanding in contrast to how she was before she started working on the radio. Both speakers thus explain becoming political by positioning their interests as outcomes of learning, in the university (P33) and at work (P24).

There is a related point. Note the inferential work that speakers do to imply that they did not start learning about politics because they intended to do so from the start. In extract 9, P33 attends to the assumption that she started to study political science because she was interested in politics in the first place. She does so by explicitly denying initial interest (‘I started not because I was £ that much interested in politics’, line 3) and putting forward an alternative reason (‘I started because I (0.2) liked the way the lecturer was presenting information about [...] that academic subject’, lines 4, 6). In such a way, decision to study politics is displayed to be independent from political interest. The speaker in extract 10 builds up a similar inference by describing her coming to work at the radio as accidental, happening ‘by a twist of fate’ (line 4). This formulation functions to suggest that P24 did not intentionally seek employment that would make her knowledgeable about politics; rather, she just happened to be there and ‘got into’ it (line 4). A further resource to display the lack of intention to work on this specific radio station is the three-part list the interviewee produces in line 2, ‘I wanted to work everywhere I wanted to learn as much as possible and so on’. The last item of the list — ‘and so on’ — is a so-called generalised list completer (Jefferson, 1990), which is often used to complete the list when speakers are having difficulty in locating a specific third item. P24’s completed list demonstrates her openness and lack of preference for work, and in so doing wards off the inference that it was her active choice to work on the Echo of Moscow radio

station. So, we can see how both speakers deny initial intentions of learning about politics. It is similar to what we have seen in section 2, where the speakers employ two-part designs to set up inferences of no initial interest.

An additional observation has to do with the issue of credibility. In contrast to P6 above, here the speakers do not explicitly defend the credibility of their sources; however, it can be argued that their setting formulations implicitly take care of it. Recall that P33 acquires the knowledge that makes him more politically interested, from the university programme, which is, conventionally, a legitimate source. In the case of P42, referring to the radio station setting fulfils the function of justifying it. Through naming the radio station, the interviewee mobilises shared cultural knowledge associated with it. For supporters of protest in Russia (to which the interviewer has initially attributed herself), the Echo of Moscow radio is likely to be seen among the most reliable sources of information. In addition, her claim of getting to learn about ‘what’s really happening’ (line 12) emphasises the truthfulness of her knowledge and in so doing, strengthens its credibility.

Overall, the extracts analysed in this section address the topic of political interest in contexts of learning and acquiring knowledge, with the speakers explaining the transition from apolitical to politically concerned as a consequence of gathering information from legitimate sources.

Discussion

The first empirical chapter employed a discursive psychological approach to explore how lay protesters address the topic of political interest in interview conversations. In contrast to conceptualising descriptions of attitudes as evidencing underlying psychological states, I analysed descriptions as resources for accomplishing various pragmatic tasks.

The chapter has demonstrated that talking about political interest is not an unproblematic accomplishment for the interviewees. The basic analytic finding was that people gave specific reasons for becoming interested in politics, when they were asked

about it by the interviewer but also of their own accord. In so doing, they displayed their understanding that political interests and attitudes are matters that require accounting for. I have identified and examined three explanatory patterns: portraying political interest as fostered by others; presenting it as a result of a problematic experience; and positioning it as outcome of learning about the political situation.

I have pointed to the three particularly intriguing interactional features that seem to appear across the accounts. First, the topic of political interest has been addressed with reference to attitudinal change, a transition from not being interested in the past to being interested in the present. Second, the interviewees mobilised various resources to imply that they did not intend to become interested in politics. Third, my findings suggested that the lack of political interest was also an accountable matter.

With regard to the first feature, it is perhaps not surprising that the speakers' accounts take story-like forms, as there is clearly something powerful in telling stories about change. Scholars of politics who study storytelling in protest, such as Davis (2002) and Polletta (2006), have been arguing that for people involved in social movements, stories, and in particular stories of change, are powerful resources for sense-making. Specifically, Polletta has argued that, while it is usual for protesters' autobiographical accounts to be organised chronologically, such organisation does more than just telling the order of events: it makes the end-point of the story more meaningful and authentic. Sacks (1978) has made a similar observation in his study of organisation of a dirty joke. He noticed that the events there were organised in a temporal order, in what he has called 'the canonical form for narratives' (p. 252). Such temporal ordering, Sacks suggested, does a particular job: it helps the speaker to portray the events that took place as believable and plausible. Taking these arguments into consideration, it can be proposed that the three-part temporal sequencing (no interest in the past — events leading to change — interest in the present), noticeable in nearly all of the accounts in this chapter, is a resource to portray the interested attitude as more genuine. The implicit contrast between the attitudes provides for an inference that political interest is a product of dynamic development and hence is not simply a whim, in turn bringing it out as a 'real thing'.

A related observation here is that the descriptions of the events leading to change — in particular those we saw in section 2 — can also be seen as contribute to warranting political interest as genuine. Recall how in extracts 5-7 speakers argued that they became interested in politics after experiencing unjust problematic situations. These formulations echo those identified by Hunt and Benford (1993), who, as part of their research on identity talk in social movements, have studied protesters' stories of becoming politically aware. Hunt and Benford demonstrated that people often described becoming politically interested after recognising that some sort of injustice is taking place. The researchers called these narratives 'atrocity tales' and argued that through invoking anger and other feelings of injustice, such tales enabled speakers to justify becoming political, and presented their political awakening as authentic. In my data, the speakers we encountered in the second section did a similar kind of inferential work when they told stories of encountering problematic situations. While not necessarily describing 'atrocities', their accounts invited inferences of moral injustice, which were hearable as being responsible for bringing about attitudinal change. As such, the development of political interest was made more justified: the arguments were set to make the hearer (the interviewer) to come to the conclusion that becoming politically interested and even politically active was the only way to address the problematic situation.

With regard to the second feature, my analytic findings can be related to the suggestion made by some of the scholars of protest, that the first step towards establishing protester identity lies in knowingly becoming interested in socio-political situation (Klandermans & Oegema, 1987; McCarthy & Zald, 1977). What my data demonstrate, however, is that speakers often try to ward off the inferences that they became interested intentionally. A range of conversational tactics was used to do so; for example, invoking the influence of relevant others (extracts 1-4), using 'I was just doing X when Y' designs (extracts 5-6) and rejecting having initial interest in learning about politics (extracts 9-10). Importantly, this does not mean that people truly became interested by chance. Rather, it suggests that there are certain interpersonal issues at play and people formulate denials of intent as ways of dealing with these. As Wooffitt (1992) has noted, diminishing of agency is a tool for dealing with potential scepticism about personal credibility: it helps to warrant

the objective nature of the experience (see also Avery & Antaki (1997), for extending this observation beyond the accounts of the paranormal). Building on this argument, it can be proposed that for people who are interested in politics in Russia, especially if they are not officially associated with the world of politics, there is a risk of being seen as in some way biased. Indeed, given some of the literature discussed in the introduction to this chapter, this issue seems to ‘fit’ with Russian cultural settings. As I have shown, many scholars have pointed out that the value of political interest has been undermined in Russia. Moreover, it has been suggested that public interest in politics has been the object of state regulation, with the government actively striving to turn people’s attention away from politics through propaganda (Shevtsova, 2013). In such an environment, interest in politics might risk being seen as suspicious and provoke questions regarding the motives of an interested person. But if it is implied that people came to be interested without intending to do so — be it because they were influenced by their friends, or because they accidentally came across a problematic situation, or because they started learning about politics as a consequence of their work/study — the risk of interest being seen as suspicious is significantly reduced. Establishing the lack of intention to become interested thus assists credibility to work, by playing down the potential charge of having a stake.

Finally, with respect to the third feature, we have seen how the speakers designed their explanations so that their previous inattention to politics had been seen as an expectable attitude. This evidences that political interest *on the whole* is a sensitive topic to address for the participants, and demonstrates that being apolitical in Russia is not as unproblematic an attitude as some scholars have suggested. Indeed, by doing work of justifying both being political and being apolitical, respondents can be seen to manage a dilemma (Billig, Condor, Edwards, Gane, Middleton & Radley, 1988). The dilemma might be associated with navigating the path between being seen as overly passive, and hence potentially ignorant — and too interested, and hence potentially invested and biased. These findings, then, demonstrate that protesters do not necessarily have agreeing and straightforward views about their attitudes, and that whether something is ‘normative’ or ‘expected’ is a practical matter that is up for speakers, and not analysts, to establish.

To conclude, while the analysis shows that speakers facilitate a variety of inferences through their accounts, the main analytic message from this chapter is that talking about political interest is a sensitive business. With regard to this, it is helpful to remember the basic conversation analytic premise, that interactions are underpinned by culturally available sets of assumptions (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008; Sacks, 1992). The findings from this chapter make it possible to suggest that in Russia there are certain assumptions that make the topic of political interest sensitive and difficult to address straightforwardly. It would be interesting to explore whether similar considerations inform the accounts of more active participation. For this reason, the next chapter investigates the ways in which the motives for active protest participation are talked about by the participants.

Chapter 4. ‘And so I went’: instrumentality and emotion talk in formulating motives for active protest involvement

The previous chapter explored the arguments around the acquisition of political attitudes and interests, paying close attention to the ways attitudinal change was accomplished in talk. This chapter is concerned with how protesters explain their active involvement in protest. In this way, my research focus goes one step further along the classic movement participation model (Oegema & Klandermans, 1994), and zooms in on the topic of action mobilisation. In particular, I explore how participants manufacture various causal explanations about their protesting behaviour through talk, and how in so doing accountability of active protest involvement is built up.

The issue of accountability seems to be of particular importance when it comes to the topic of overt protest involvement. As discussed in the literature review, due to the specifics of culture and history, overt protest in Russia has not been seen as a legitimate form of political participation (Greene, 2014; Robertson, 2011). Moreover, the protests of 2011-2012 have been actively condemned by the government propaganda as demonstrations of public disobedience (White, 2013) and depicted as a ‘hipster’ pastime of the privileged few (cosmopolitan, rich, Muscovites; Kal’k, 2012). It is thus reasonable to suggest that under such circumstances it is in the protesters’ best interest to present their behaviour as legitimate. Assuming this is so, it is important to examine motive accounts, since they show what arguments protesters themselves put forward as adequate grounds for protesting. These constructions are also potentially able to shed light on the specifics of mobilisation in a particular historical and cultural context.

Researchers have enquired into the motives behind protest participation in Russia, attributing them to the variety of structural, demographic and psychological factors. For example, Greene (2012; 2013) proposed that the protests were triggered by the stratification of Russian society from 2008 onward, with more people becoming affluent and interested in political matters, and by the public perceptions of government illegitimacy, resulting from the events of September 2011, when the then-president

Medvedev appointed the then-prime minister Putin to be his successor, with himself settling for the prime minister post. Such scholars as Gudkov (2012b), Lipman (2012) and Shevtsova (2013) argued that the main motives for actively taking to the streets had to do with moral indignation over generic injustices of political and legal systems, as well as with the promotion of the narrative that ordinary people can make a change. Nonetheless, there has been little empirical research into how people themselves give explanations for their active involvement, and the functional nature of such constructions. The majority of academic explanations found in the literature rest on the assumptions of traditional social psychological understanding of protest, that something within (perception of grievances) or outside (instability of the political system) individuals more or less automatically *impels* them go and protest. By contrast, in line with the methodological focus of my study, I follow discourse-oriented researchers such as Edwards, Potter and their colleagues (Billig, 1996; Edwards, 2005a; Edwards & Potter, 2000; Stokoe, 2012), in seeing motives as interactional resources for sense-making. According to this line of thought, in talking about their motives people discursively explain and justify their actions, rather than demonstrate internal cognitive states that condition such actions. In other words, I assume that motive talk is functional; as Mills (1940, p. 940) has famously pointed out, ‘the differing reasons men give for their actions are not themselves without reasons’.

Method

The extracts for this chapter were chosen mainly from a collection of accounts produced in response to a direct question ‘why did you go to the protest’ or, more often, an indirect variant of this question ‘why it was important for you to go/join the protest’. Two extracts (9 and 10) were taken from a collection of extracts in which respondents talk about their reasons for active protest involvement without being directly asked about it by the interviewer. The ten extracts presented below are broadly representative of the two ways in which respondents were accounting for their motive involvement. In these extracts, a range of protest types is discussed, from demonstrations against the election fraud to ecological protests. There were no strong analytic grounds for limiting the focus

solely to anti-state protests; in fact, focusing on a range of different protests made the analysis more robust, in the way that it was able to demonstrate how similar rhetorical strategies are used to explain taking part in different kinds of protests.

In some extracts, I do not include the original interviewer's questions, because the relevant descriptions were often given half way through the answer, and including the question would disturb the flow of the extract; furthermore, in such cases looking at the question would not add much to the analysis. Thus, omitting it was seen as a sensible strategy, especially given that it was not my objective to focus specifically on the question-answer format.

To identify concrete fragments for this chapter, I read through and listened to the collections several times, selected a number of patterned fragments, and translated and transcribed them in detail in accordance with CA conventions. Then, I separated the extracts into two groups, according to the bases for motives that the respondents recurrently refer to: I called them 'instrumental' and 'emotional' practices. The chapter is structured in line with these two strategies.

1. 'Who if not us': justifying the instrumental and obligational nature of protesting

I start the analysis by looking at a relatively short extract that shows how a speaker deals with the question about his motive for active protest involvement. The extract is taken from a conversation about the interviewee's experience of being a participant in a number of anti-government demonstrations. The question in line 1 was asked after the interviewee had mentioned that he had received threats urging him to stop being actively involved; 'despite this' means 'despite receiving threats'.

Extract 4.1: Protester 31, male, Volgograd

- 1 YL why despite this it's still important for you to do what you do (.)
2 and you continue to do it?

3 P31 because first I live not just for myself (.) I have my family um (0.2) I have a child
 4 and I hope that I'll have more than one
 5 and I hope that after all he'd live (.) in a better country
 6 in a somewhat different country from the one I live in
 7 (0.5)
 8 it's for him that I'm making an effort

The extract begins with P31 being asked to explain his continuous protest participation despite being pressured to stop. The question assumes that remaining actively involved in protest is a matter of personal importance ('it's still important for you', line 1). In response, the interviewee seems to do two things.

First, he implies that his reasons for protesting go beyond self-centred concerns. Specifically, in line 3 he says 'I live not just for myself'. This claim enables P31 to adjust the focus of the conversation by focusing on a specific aspect of his protest involvement: it being about others rather than just about himself.

Second, he introduces a specific category of such others — his family. He says 'I have my family (0.2) I have a child' (line 3). These descriptions are category-resonant, in that they invite the listener to see P31 as a resident in a certain category — as a 'parent' — without explicitly calling him so (Schegloff, 2007). In so doing, the interviewee discursively binds his motive for protest involvement to his role as a parent. The subsequent formulation regarding his hopes for a better country (lines 5-6) is thus heard in the context of 'parent-child' relational pair, as a logical parental desire to care for their children and ensure their children's wellbeing (Stokoe, 2012). The implication here is that although it is P31 who 'hopes' (lines 4-5), this hope is made to be seen as a natural extension of his role as a parent. In effect, his motive appears accountable as a means of pursuing such a natural aim. The utterance in line 8 contributes towards this construction by emphasising P31's intent to act for the benefit of his son. Active protest participation is thus manufactured as a logical behaviour and as instrument of fulfilling one's duty as a parent.

Overall, then, P31's account draws on the power of categories to do the accounting work: through positioning himself as a parent, P31 legitimises his protest as an expression

of parental responsibility. In so doing, the motive is designed to be seen as if situated outside of P31 himself; his protest is seen as something that needs to be done, as a logical necessity.

The speaker in the following extract similarly orients to the normative predicates of his role, in talking about his participation in the series of protests against the state's economic policy, in particular against the law that introduced high taxes on right-hand drive cars in Russia. This extract is the second part of the response to the question about P2's motive for joining those protests; it follows him discussing some positive aspects of Putin's policies, such as free education and relative economic stability, and stating that his protest did not aim specifically at improving his own life.

Extract 4.2: Protester 2, male, Moscow

- 1 P2 when I was protesting with the drivers I helped them (.) I guess in fact
2 I helped them quite a lot
3 YL mmhm
4 P2 (0.2) I didn't have a car and I'm not going to buy one now, right-hand drive, left-hand drive
5 doesn't matter I didn't care a bit, it's not an economic interest, it was simply a principle
6 YL mmhm
7 P2 it was just (.) like an ideology
8 YL mm
9 P2 for me like (.) it was um ideology like id- idea (0.5) like I said I'm a historian I know how
10 like (.) the society develops, I know what has to be done what shouldn't be done
11 YL mmhm
12 P2 that's it
13 (0.8)
14 it's just I understand it and I understand that this is right and this is wrong
15 YL mmhm
16 P2 like if this regime continues like this then it'd be like that and it'd become like (.) even worse
17 YL aha aha

Note how in line 1 the interviewee describes his protest in terms of helping a particular category of people, 'the drivers'. Similarly to the first extract, this grounds an

understanding that the speaker's actions were motivated by concerns about others, rather than oneself. This understanding is reinforced by formulations that explicitly discount personal interests. For example, the interviewee describes helping the drivers 'quite a lot' (line 2), while positioning himself outside of the category 'driver', as he says 'I didn't have a car and I'm not going to buy one now' (line 4). Furthermore, P2 displays his lack of interest in the topic of cars overall ('right-hand drive, left-hand drive doesn't matter I didn't care a bit', lines 4-5). He also explicitly denies having 'economic interest' in line 5. Such non-investment formulations function to downplay the possibility of his active protest involvement being seen as motivated by his self-centred interests, warranting an essentially altruistic motivation instead.

The interviewee's selfless behaviour is portrayed as being driven by logic as well. Following the refutation of personal interests, P2 reports that he was guided by 'a principle' (line 5). In a chain of self-initiated repairs in lines 5-9, the speaker alters the formulations from 'simply a principle' (line 5), to 'ideology' (lines 7, 9), to 'idea' (line 9). Arguably, the lack of uptake from the interviewer in lines 6 and 8 may have contributed to the production of new terms; nonetheless, these terms are similar to the extent that they present P2 as acting upon a certain agenda, which suggests that his protest involvement was an informed choice. The subsequent account seems to be structured so as to justify the legitimacy of such a choice and simultaneously manage the normativity of the behaviour.

In lines 9-10, P2 goes on to build up legitimacy of his motivation by invoking his identity as a 'historian' and pointing to the associated category predicates ('I know how like (.) the society develops'). This construction works to highlight his expertise and knowledge, thereby implying that his protest behaviour was based on a sound understanding of the situation. Additionally, P2 seems to highlight the normative aspect of his position. In line 10, he claims that due to his occupation he knows 'what has to be done what shouldn't be done'. Modal verbs here underline the necessity of action and imply that P2 was simply obliged to act based on his knowledge, thereby portraying active protest involvement as imperative. The upshot in line 12 — 'that's it' — nicely completes

the account by implying that P2 had no other reasons to take part in a protest other than his understanding that it should be done.

Interestingly, however, the lack of uptake from the interviewer (pause in line 13) seems to be interpreted by P2 as a sign that his explanation is not sufficient in some way, and he produces a further account that contributes towards the normativity of protest involvement. In line 14, he reiterates the importance of his understanding ('it's just I understand it') and of his ability to separate 'right' from 'wrong'. In line 16 he points to the danger of letting the regime go unchallenged. With this, the protest is positioned as the imperative 'right' thing that would prevent the situation from getting worse, thus highlighting its instrumental nature. Hence in the second extract, the topic of protest is discussed in such a way as to account for the necessity of active protest involvement in the context of the duties one has.

The final observation about the two extracts above is the vagueness of formulations. For instance, it is notable that neither speaker provides an explicit account of what they were set to achieve by becoming actively involved in protest: P31 said that he wished for a 'better country [...] somewhat different country' for his child (1:5-6), and P2 argued that he was driven by an understanding that 'if this regime continues like this then it'd be like that' (2:16). Both formulations have an abstract quality to them; they can be seen as examples of systemic vagueness, the rhetorical technique for fact construction (Edwards & Potter, 2000). The oblique references provide just enough justification to show that behaviour was motivated by important concerns, but at the same time they do not offer any detailed information about the protest involvement. As such, these formulations are rhetorically 'safe' because they are difficult to rebut.

Overall, the first two extracts illustrate how speakers construct the rationale for their protest actions through invoking categories. The analysis shows that speakers discount self-centred motivations and claim to be driven by an aspiration to help others and by responsibility concerns derived from their roles as a parent (P31) and historian (P2). In effect, their protest involvement is made accountable on the grounds of its instrumentality.

The next two extracts demonstrate another pattern of explaining active protest involvement as rational and necessary, through using the rhetoric of argumentation (Billig, 1996; Potter, 1996). Extract 3 is a part of the conversation between the interviewer and the male protester, about the latter's involvement in a number of anti-government demonstrations in Moscow. The speaker in extract 4 is a female protester from Volgograd, who talks about her participation in an ecological protest in the town of Novohopersk, some 380 kilometres away from Volgograd, against the building of a nickel mining plant⁶.

Extract 4.3: Protester 25, male, Moscow

- 1 YL why it's important (0.2) for you to go to these demonstrations and protest?
- 2 P25 um (.) you know it's important because I want that in this country
- 3 YL mmhm
- 4 P25 um the laws to be obeyed (.) why↑ because if the laws would really work (.)
- 5 would really be obeyed and they would be really adequate laws
- 6 YL mmhm
- 7 P25 then um (.) let's say (0.5) one option the consequent option let's say (0.2)
- 8 is that the citizens' lives would become easier more convenient (.)
- 9 YL mmhm
- 10 P25 comfortable and among other things that'd foster economic growth too
- 11 YL mmhm
- 12 P25 because it's a fact that (.) if the country's laws don't work um
- 13 no investment (0.2) would flow inside the country
- 14 that's it (.)
- 15 YL mmhm mmhm

⁶ It was typical for the respondents from Volgograd to talk about their involvement in protests beyond anti-regime demonstrations, notably in ecological protests. This might be due to the fact that, compared to the capitals of Moscow and Saint Petersburg, in this regional city, large-scale street protest against the government has been less prevalent, while concerns with environmental pollution are traditionally strong due to the bad ecological situation in the region.

Extract 4.4: Protester 33, female, Volgograd

- 1 YL why do you support the protest there?
2 P33 I think it's really an ecological concern after all (.)
3 it'll reach us sooner or later because Volgograd (.)
4 well yes it's situated within some hundred kilometres but (0.2)
5 the wind plays a role here (.) the river plays a role (.) and so it'll reach us
6 YL mmhm
7 P33 and I understand that sooner or later it'll reach here
8 YL mmhm
9 P33 and reach my friends my (.) um parents and so on
10 even if I decide to move as I plan but still (.)
11 YL mmhm
12 P33 one shouldn't do the thing that people often do here
13 to make a mess somewhere and then leave like *I don't care any more*
14 YL mmhm

In both extracts, the speakers begin answering the interviewer's question by giving reasons for protesting. P25 explicitly states that the protest is important for him because he wants 'the laws to be obeyed' in Russia (3:4). P33 expresses the reason more implicitly, by referring to an 'ecological concern' (4:2), which in the context of the preceding talk is understood as the harmful environmental impact of nickel mining. In so doing, she implies that her understanding ('I think') of the concern is her motive for becoming involved. Hence in addressing the reasons, both speakers suggest that their actions are based on what Edwards (2008) called 'intentional states', on them 'thinking' and 'wanting' something. Edwards observed that intentional states often feature in the motive-related reports. He also suggested, however, that on their own, intentional state formulations do not automatically justify actions; just because someone wants to do something does not mean it should be done. Indeed, the extracts above evidence this argument: formulations of reasons there are followed by additional descriptions that portray such reasons as accountable.

These descriptions take the form of the rhetoric of argumentation, that is, they warrant the motive by presenting it as a logical consequence of the external situation that exists independently from speakers (Antaki & Leudar, 1990; Edwards & Potter, 2000). The speaker in extract 3 uses the rhetoric of argumentation to show that his desire to uphold the law is sensible because it brings objective benefits. After asking a rhetorical question in line 4, he uses ‘if-then’ format to point to the generic benefit for the people of Russia: if such laws ‘would really work’ then ‘the citizens’ lives would become easier’ (lines 4, 8). Since ‘if-then’ format is particularly felicitous for bringing out logical connections between the parts of the argument (Edwards, 1997), it presents P25’s claim as rational and not requiring special accounting. In addition, the three-part list — ‘easier more convenient [...] comfortable’ (lines 8, 10) — makes the claim of benefits more representative (Jefferson, 1990). Furthermore, P25 grounds the legitimacy of his reasons by invoking economic advantage (‘that’d foster economic growth too’, line 10). Describing this advantage as based on a ‘fact’ (lines 12-13) makes it look like a part of the ‘out there’ reality, the valid benefit worth fighting for. P25’s rhetoric, then, works to portray his protest motive as being in accordance with logic, and his protest actions as instrumental for achieving benefits for all.

Similarly, in extract 4 the interviewee attends to the logical reasoning behind her understanding that Volgograd will be affected by the building of the mining plant. She states that ‘it’ll reach us’ (lines 3, 5), thereby portraying impact as a certainty rather than a possibility. She also acknowledges the distance between Volgograd and the plant site (‘yes it’s situated within some hundred kilometres’, line 4) and then points to the factors — ‘the wind plays a role here (.) the river plays a role’ (line 5) — that seem to ‘override’ the factor of distance. P33’s design therefore anticipates a potential objection to the facticity of her claim and undermines it, establishing harmful environmental impact as a fact of reality existing independently from her thoughts. She thus constructs a version of events that rhetorically works to display her worry and, in turn, her protest involvement as accountable. Overall, then, the design of the accounts can be seen as an interactional resource for manufacturing the validity of speakers’ motives and accomplishing accountability for their active protest involvement.

The last notable feature of extracts 3 and 4 is the display of the speakers' consideration for others. By referring to the 'citizens' lives' (3:8), P25 makes it clear that his end goal is to benefit the wider community, thus playing down the idea of personal advantage. P33 implies that the effect of the plant on the others ('my friends my (.) um parents and so on', 4:9) remains an important consideration for her even if she leaves Volgograd herself (line 10), thereby making the other-related motivation principal. At the same time, P33 attends to the moral basis of her reasons in line 12 ('one shouldn't do the thing'). In effect, her motivation is offered as a valid consequence of the normative duty to take responsibility for one's actions, at the same time emphasising the selfless nature of her protesting. So both interviewees work up altruistic justifications for their active protest involvement: their actions are seen as virtuous as they bring benefits to others. The argument is extremely powerful in highlighting both the rationality and moral worth of one's behaviour as it uses rhetorical appeal to general human progress (Jasper, 1992).

In the final extract in this section, the motive for active protest involvement is formulated in such a way that protesting comes across as not only rational, but essentially natural. The extract comes from an interview with a male protester from Volgograd, who discusses the demonstration against the industrial development of the floodplains of the Volga and Akhtuba rivers. The protest was organised by a local volunteer group that the interviewee is a part of. The extract comes half way through the answer to the interviewer's question about why the protest was important to go to.

Extract 4.5: Protester 35, male, Volgograd

- 1 P35 so (.) it's because well (.) we all live here and our children will live here and if we're left
- 2 with concrete and asphalt and the like (.) the desert (.) then nobody would benefit from that
- 3 YL mmhm
- 4 P35 I mean basically if there'll be a desert then nobody could live here at all
- 5 (0.5)
- 6 that's it (.) we would need to move away from here
- 7 YL mmhm mmhm
- 8 P35 so (.) it's something along these lines and that's why (.)

9 some economic satisfaction (.) or else we don't have them (.)
 10 w-we don't have any trade in the floodplain nothing I mean
 11 we don't have our own personal interests there
 12 (0.5)
 13 so and (.) the only thing that directs us is common sense I guess
 14 YL mmhm
 15 P35 and that's why um (0.2) after all someone has to do it (.)
 16 if there is such- such urge such need that (.) the nature is dying and
 17 YL mmhm
 18 P35 and the death (.) I mean the reason for this death is human himself
 19 then naturally it's up to human to repair and restore all that
 20 YL to fix it mmhm
 21 P35 yeah because who if not us (.) so that's it

P35's account can be divided into three conceptual parts based on the actions that he performs through talk. First, the interviewee constructs a rationale for his actions. He begins by orienting to an ecological issue and portrays it as a significant threat to the whole community ('we all live here', line 1) and to the future generations ('our children will live here', line 1). He explains that there is a danger of the people being 'left with concrete and asphalt and the like (.) the desert' (line 2). In so doing, he suggests that there is an 'out-there' objective issue that requires attention. The rational character of his narrative is assisted by the 'if-then' format. P35 uses this structure twice to point to the consequences of the ecological collapse. Specifically, the 'if' clause is used to portray the outcome of ignoring the issue of ecology ('if we're left with concrete and asphalt ... the desert', lines 1-2; 'if there'll be a desert', line 4), and the 'then' clause fleshes out the negative consequences. The description of the potential after-effects is worked up as a worsening progression, from 'then nobody would benefit from that' in line 2, to 'nobody could live here at all' in line 4, which justifies the need for protest through inviting the implications that not acting on the issue would have far-reaching consequences well beyond being simply unfavourable. This effect is reinforced by the use of extreme case formulations (Pomerantz, 1986), such as 'nobody' and 'at all' and by putting emphasis on 'nobody'. As such, the rationale is spelt out in such a way as to account for why protest is necessary.

The descriptions present P35's motivation as driven by objective logic of protecting the environment and the people. In that way, protesting becomes an instrument of preserving nature and, by implication, people's lives.

Second, the interviewee explicitly discounts other motives for his protest involvement. This is done through formulating a three-part list of things P35 and his volunteer group are *not* concerned with. The description in lines 9-11 comes across as a list because the speaker uses a refrain 'we don't have': 1) 'some economic satisfaction (.) or else we don't have them'; 2) 'we don't have any trade in the floodplain nothing'; 3) 'we don't have our own personal interests there'. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, lists are effective rhetorical resources for summarising general classes of things and making arguments sound more convincing (Edwards & Potter, 2000; Jefferson, 1990). Here the listing suggests that self-centred, gain-seeking motives are consistently irrelevant for P35 and his group, thereby supporting the general claim that they are indeed motivated by ecological concerns and wellbeing of the potentially affected community. The respondent hence actively denounces egoistic reasons for his protest involvement and establishes his behaviour as not just rational, but selfless and moral in nature.

Third, the speaker portrays his actions as natural and imperative. The upshot in line 13 — 'the only thing that directs us is common sense' — is of interest here. Benwell (2012) pointed out that 'common sense' is not just a description, but a type of justification in its own right; that is, when claims are packaged as 'commonsensical' they are made to be perceived as intuitively correct. In the account above, the interviewee suggests that his involvement is underpinned solely by common sense. Formulated this way, it does not require additional evidence: P35's actions are seen as natural on the grounds of being a part of shared commonalities of what is sensible (see also Billig, 1991; 1996). The speaker strengthens this effect by using a script formulation, a description that establishes actions as normative (Edwards, 1994; Sneijder & te Molder, 2005). Specifically, he suggests that 'if [...] nature is dying' (line 16), 'then naturally it's up to human to repair and restore all that' (line 19). According to Edwards (1994), scripts normalise practices and imply that they do not require any special accounting. Indeed, this appears to be the function of P35's formulation: by establishing helping nature when it is in need (especially given that 'the

reason for this death is human himself ‘, line 18) as a script, his actions become seen as natural and not in need of any additional justification. The normalising work is supported by an explicit reference to the ‘naturalness’ of the expectation (line 19). In addition, the claim ‘someone has to do it’ (line 15) further highlights the normative nature of protesting, by portraying it as something that must be done, while rhetorical question ‘who if not us’ (line 21) suggests that apart from P35 and his volunteer group there is no one to take on this highly important task.

Note also that P35 appears to make use of systematic vagueness (Edwards & Potter, 2000), similarly to some of the interviewees discussed above. Together with defending against potential challenges, being vague enables P35 to establish the facticity of his claims. For example, using a passive construction to say that people might be ‘left with concrete and asphalt’ (lines 1-2) not only glosses over the particularities of the damage, but also downplays the agency of those responsible, depicting the damage as something that simply takes place. Furthermore, in line 16 the interviewee reports that ‘the nature is dying’; such reporting portrays the problem as a fact of nature rather than a consequence of someone’s actions. In line 18, the interviewee invokes a collective faceless ‘human’, who is described to be ‘the reason for this death’. This description, in line with P35’s instrumentality argument, suggests that arguing over who is to blame is not as important as addressing the issue of damage and preventing more damage from happening.

Overall, by means of the explanations discussed above, P35 makes his protest involvement justifiable. His account appears to fulfil this justificatory function specifically because he portrays his behaviour as natural and motivated by a selfless objective to protect the people from an ecological disaster.

To summarise, the analysis of the extracts in this section illustrates how active protest involvement is warranted on the basis of logical ‘out-there’ concerns and of having a duty to care for the others. The accounts share an emphasis on the instrumental nature of protest involvement. The speakers draw upon the notion that the state of affairs is such that it naturally requires attention, and active protest participation is implied to be a way of doing so. Protest involvement is also described as selfless behaviour, motivated by the

desire to benefit others, actively countering alternative explanations that the protesters are motivated personal or economic gain.

2. 'I felt such a resentment': formulating emotional motives for protest participation

This section explores the motive accounts that are structured around the emotional need to address an injustice. Emotion-centred arguments were particularly prevalent in the interviews with people who joined the protest movement after acting as election observers during the 2011 Parliamentary election. However, this section also contains extracts from other protest contexts, supporting my earlier argument that similar justifications can be produced regardless of the specific nature of protest.

The first extract of this section follows the interviewee describing her reasons for taking part in the 'For Fair Elections' demonstration in December 2011. Earlier in the conversation the respondent mentioned that she worked as an election observer on the day before this demonstration.

Extract 4.6: Protester 10, female, Moscow

- 1 YL why was it important to go out to protest?
2 P10 well (.) in a way it's I guess a pro- this is pe- personal (.) I mean I was like humiliated
3 offended the night before
4 YL mmhm
5 P10 well the last night and I don't know (.) I didn't have enough sleep so
6 I felt somewhat bad overall uh (.) and well I don't know at the polling station
7 everything was done wrongly basically (.) not like (.) uh not by law
8 I mean sure they took the rigged votes out but in principle the results should've been annulled
9 but of course nobody was there to do it (.) and we agreed to disagree
10 YL mmhm
11 P10 uh but (.) well like I know that my friends felt bad and I felt that if I stay at home and
12 would watch some movies or else it would be uh (0.3) wrong in relation to oneself
13 YL mm

- 14 P10 uh because well like (.) we were again uh offended humiliated and we're like *ok fine*
15 YL mmhm
16 P10 at least to go out and (.) tell about this (.) and it's not like I was there alone

In response to the question, the interviewee starts building up towards the motive for protesting. Specifically, she produces a 'well'-preface, followed by 'in a way' and 'I guess' (line 2), all of which seem to indicate that something sensitive is to follow (Schegloff & Lerner, 2009). As such, even before the explanation is given, the listener is alerted to the idea that it might be troublesome in some way. P10 continues by indicating that her motive is subjectively oriented ('this is pe- personal', line 2) and relates to her being 'humiliated offended the night before' (lines 2-3). In so doing, she presents her negative emotional state as the reason for joining the demonstration.

In the remainder of the account, P10 does the work of warranting her emotional state, and the resulted protest involvement, as legitimate. This is done in a number of ways. First, the interviewee points out that she was physically unwell due to the lack of sleep, which resulted in her feeling 'bad overall' (lines 5-6). She thus makes available an understanding that her emotional state could have been partially dependent upon her physical state.

Second, she produces a description of the 'last night' (line 5), the night before the demonstration took place. In particular, she recalls how 'everything was done wrongly' and 'not by law' (line 7), and that 'nobody was there' to correct it (line 9). Extreme case formulations (Pomerantz, 1986) here make the account more effective in portraying the totality of negligence and presenting the events at the polling station in highly negative light. Furthermore, she makes clear that she was not able to fulfil her duties as an observer and ensure the full compliance with the law: while the falsified votes were taken out, the results were not annulled (line 8), which resulted in unsatisfactory resolution of the conflict ('we agreed to disagree', line 9). Such portrayals are designed to provide legitimate basis for feeling humiliated and offended, by occasioning it as a response to the gross miscarriage of justice. In this way, legitimacy of emotional motive is closely bound up with descriptions of the situation that provoked the emotion; in other words, accounts

of ‘situation *make emotions intelligibly present*’ (Coulter, 1986, p. 123, emphasis in original).

The third way in which P10 justifies her emotional state is by depicting it as shared between other people. Specifically, in line 11 she says ‘I know that my friends felt bad’; this knowledge claim evidences consensus with regard to the presence of negative feelings. Furthermore, her feeling of humiliation, although first positioned as personal (line 2), is portrayed as publicly shared by attributing it to others (‘we were again uh offended, humiliated’, line 14). The last line of the extract offers additional evidence that there were other people who joined the demonstration (‘it’s not like I was there alone’, line 16). Although P10 does not explicitly describe such people as ‘offended’, this understanding is likely due to the utterance being sequentially positioned immediately after the suggestion that people go out to voice their offence. Orientations to others thus function to imply that the emotions felt by the speakers are reasonable because they were felt by others in the same situation.

Finally, note how the interviewee constructs her protest involvement as normative by depicting non-involvement as morally wrong. In lines 11-12, she claims that staying at home and doing more ‘ordinary’ things would be ‘wrong in relation to oneself’. The suggestion here is that ignoring one’s emotions — which is equal to closing one’s eyes to the fact of humiliation (‘and we’re like *ok fine*’, line 14) — is morally deficient and should not be done. In contrast, acting upon one’s negative emotions is implied to be ‘the right thing to do’, and is thus accounted for.

Overall, then, extract 6 shows how active protest involvement can be explained in terms of a negative emotional state. It seems that one of the big concerns of such a strategy is with justifying the legitimacy of emotion. The above analysis demonstrated a number of tactics through which the emotional motive was presented as appropriate under the circumstances. The next two extracts show a further way of ‘emotional’ accounting for protest involvement, by drawing upon the notion of direct witnessing. In extracts 7 and 8, the interviewees discuss their reasons for participating in the first large-scale protest that took place immediately after the election day, on 5th December 2011, in Saint Petersburg and in Moscow, respectively. Both extracts are taken from the middle of the interviewees’

responses to the question about why it was important for them to join the demonstrations. Some lines in extract 7 are omitted to save space.

Extract 4.7: Protester 5, female, Saint Petersburg

- 1 P5 the result for United Russia in Saint Petersburg at least was such
2 that (.) there was no doubt that it was a falsification
3 YL mmhm
4 P5 and (.) across the whole country um the reported voting turnout was beyond all reason
5 although I saw that in Saint Petersburg very few people actually came to vote (0.2)
6 I spend the whole night in that poll- polling station (.) the central one for Saint Petersburg
7 YL mmhm
8 P5 um (.) and I saw how well (.) how United Russia (0.2) was so to speak collecting the votes
9 there were very few votes (.) after that all us observers were kicked out of the polling station
10 and in the morning those numbers appeared
11 YL mm mmhm
12 P5 that completely struck me with their like (0.5) um how should I put it um (0.2) shamelessness
13 YL mmhm mmhm
14 P5 and so (.) I worked that day (.) I should have gone to protest again as a journalist (.)
15 but I would have gone anyway
16 YL mmhm
17 P5 so I went to the ((place)) and for the first time I saw that there were so many people
((some lines omitted – she talks about being illegitimately detained by the police))
18 for the first time people (.) went not, um, because some oppositional leaders called on them
19 YL mmhm
20 P5 but because (.) um people were really sick of it
21 YL mmhm
22 P5 and they went of their own accord (.) people who never protested before like myself (.)
23 and so (0.2) I went

Extract 4.8: Protester 12, female, Moscow

- 1 P12 I was an observer and let me tell you (.) if people look with their own eyes at how
2 all this is rigged (.) ‘cause there are different ways to do it (.) and you see them all

3		if you take part in these elections (.) particularly if you have experience
4		then it's impossible for you not to notice all these falsifications
5	YL	mmhm
6	P12	(.) and when I saw it with my own eyes it's- it's a very- I felt such a resentment (0.2)
7		just a simple human resentment like how's that (0.2) you are the teachers after all (.)
8		I don't know like what if I like (.) went to my own school↑
9	YL	mmhm
10	P12	and you do such things↑
11		(1.5)
12		so it was (.) a real resentment
13	YL	mmhm
14		(1)
15		and do you think [then- mmhm
16	P12	[and so I went

Extracts 7 and 8 share three properties. First, both respondents describe the state of affairs as problematic and wrong. In extract 7, the respondent states that the election result ‘was no doubt [...] a falsification’ (line 2) and that ‘reported voting turnout was beyond all reason’ (line 4). In extract 8, the interviewee claims that ‘all this is rigged’ (line 2) and refers to ‘all these falsifications’ (line 4). Thus, both speakers indicate that the state of events is highly problematic due to the degree of falsification.

Notably, the veracity of claims of problematic situations is warranted by the entitlement of a specific category membership, that of a ‘witness’. In extract 7, the speaker positions herself as a witness by establishing her access to the witnessed scene (Potter, 1996). In particular, she describes being present at the polling station for ‘the whole night’ (line 6), which implies that she was able to observe directly what was going on. P5 strengthens her witness status by orienting to concrete experiences of ‘seeing’ via using an active construction ‘I saw’: in line 5 she describes seeing poor turnout in Saint Petersburg and in lines 8-9 she claims to have seen the process of collecting the votes, implying that United Russia was committing a fraud (‘was so to speak collecting the votes’). Similarly, in extract 8, the interviewee occasions her identity as a witness. She first does so directly, by saying ‘I was an observer’ (line 1), and then implies it in a more indirect way, by displaying her knowledge of the situation. For example, she says ‘there

are different ways to do it' (line 2), which comes across as information that would be acquired through experience. She also claims to have seen falsifications 'with [her] own eyes' (line 6), thereby making clear that she was in direct proximity to the scene. The rhetorical advantage of being seen as a witness is that witnesses' versions of the story are perceived as trusted (Potter & Edwards, 1990; Potter, 1996). For P5 and P12, claiming membership in a witness category entitles them to know what 'really' happened, in turn making their reports about election falsifications and other transgressions of law (for example, that 'observers were kicked out of the polling station', 7:9) to be seen as accurate and truthful. So in both cases, the speakers use an occasioned social identity of a witness as a resource for warranting the veracity of their claims that the situations were indeed highly problematic.

Second, respondents give accounts of their subjective negative feelings. The speaker in extract 7 describes herself as being 'completely struck' with the 'shamelessness' of misconduct (line 12). The term 'shamelessness' (*bespardonmost*) here implies that falsifications were carried out intentionally and without remorse. This implication exacerbates the situation by condemning misconduct as *morally* wrong (Jasper, 2008). In extract 8, P12 says that she 'felt such a resentment' (line 6); she repeats, and thereby stresses this feeling in lines 7 and 12. Vocal emphases in extract 7 and emphatic expressions 'such a' and 'real' in extract 8 convey the extent of emotional indignation and make speakers' reports more believable (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008).

It is important to note that negative emotions are displayed to be contingent on the witnessed misconduct and fraud. P5 orients to 'those numbers' that 'appeared' in the morning (7:10) as the basis for her strong indignation. Because of the preceding claim that the elections were unfair, the 'numbers' here are perceived as 'falsified numbers'. In that way, her moral indignation over them is seen as reasonable. In extract 8 too, P12 introduces her resentment as the product of her observation: 'when I saw it with my own eyes it's- it's a very- I felt such a resentment' (line 6). Witness entitlement assists these formulations as well. In his discussion of witness entitlement, based on the analysis of an upset car wreck witness, Sacks (1992) suggested that having a direct experience normatively entitles one to the feelings such experience generates. In case of the two

speakers above, witnessing seems to fulfil a similar normative function: it makes negative emotions seem more ‘natural’, and therefore more accountable, precisely because they are portrayed as an outcome of a first-hand experience of large-scale fraud. Moreover, the speaker in extract 8 makes available an understanding that witnessing normatively prescribes seeing falsifications and, by implication, being affected, through using an ‘if-then’ construction in the beginning of her account. She says ‘if people look with their own eyes [...] then it’s impossible for you not to notice’ (8:1, 4). This conditional formulation works to imply that for a witness being affected is normal and, in fact, impossible to avoid. By constructing such law-like connections between witnessing misconduct and feeling bad, the speakers confirm the validity of their own negative emotions.

In addition, validity of emotions is additionally justified through the constructed ‘sharedness’ of this sentiment. In extract 7, the interviewee describes how after going to place of the demonstration, she ‘saw that there were so many people’ (line 17). Later on, she claims that the people came because they ‘were really sick of it’ (line 20); ‘it’ in this context clearly refers to falsifications. Orientation to other people serves as a normalising device, making P5 one of many who felt indignation and acted on that feeling. As such, her negative emotional experience is displayed as applicable to anyone, and hence legitimate. In extract 8, although the emotional state is portrayed as personal (‘I felt such a resentment’, line 6), it is then reformulated as ‘just a simple human resentment’ in line 7. ‘Just’ plays down the exclusiveness of the feeling and indexes it as natural, in a sense that it involves little effort to feel it (Lee, 1987). ‘Simple human’ in turn orients to a collective level of identity (as a human, and not just an observer); in effect, it normalises and endorses P12’s reaction, in a similar way that adverbs such as ‘obviously’ or ‘naturally’ do (Edwards, 1997). In so doing, her emotional reaction is offered not merely as her own, personal worry, but as public concern, something that others are likely to be affected by in a similar way. In addition, the intelligibility of P12’s emotional state depends in part on the category of people who are shown to be responsible for carrying out the falsifications: ‘the teachers’. Based on category-bound features, a teacher is someone who is expected to be the moral example for the pupils. The speaker activates this relational pairing (teacher-pupil) by asking rhetorical questions in lines 8 and 10, ‘what if I like (.) went to

my own school↑ [...] and you do such things↑'. Such questions make a point (cf. Billig, 1996) that the respondent's resentment for the teachers is understandable given that they failed to fulfil their moral obligations.

Third, the negative emotions that speakers claimed to have experienced are shown to motivate their protest involvement. This is done through the use of the causal connective 'and so'. P5 uses it in lines 14-15 of extract 7, to draw a connection between her realisation of deception, strong emotional reaction and the decision to take to the streets, not as a part of her work but of her own accord. She uses it again in line 23, 'and so (0.2) I went', as a closing particle. P12 puts it to the same end in extract 8, in linking her feeling of resentment to the act of joining the protest ('so it was (.) a real resentment [...] and so I went', 8:12, 16). In addition, in extract 7 negative emotions are described as the main motive for joining the protest for other people, by contrasting two different reasons: 'people (.) went not, um, because some oppositional leaders called on them [...] but because (.) um people were really sick of it' (lines 18, 20).

The central analytic point that can be done on the basis of the above observations is that the stepwise design of the accounts is a resource for establishing the rationality of indignation, in turn warranting accountability of active protest involvement. Witness category entitlement is put to work on several levels, accounting both for the veracity of the 'troublesome situation' reports and for the legitimacy of feeling moral indignation. In effect, causal links between the event (falsified election), emotional reaction (indignation) and action (protest) are established, and active protest involvement motivated by emotion is constructed as rational and sensible behaviour.

Overall, the rhetorical pattern of extracts 6, 7 and 8 is similar in that the motive is built around presenting election observation as 'naturally' causing certain negative emotions. As the three extracts account essentially for the same type of protest (against election fraud), one might wonder whether such strategy is fruitful only under certain circumstances, for example in case of witnessing state misconduct directly. The data suggest that this is not the case. The last two extract in this section evidence this by showing how references to emotions can be used as explanations for being involved in different kinds of protest. Extract 9 follows the discussion of the then-recent protest

against the controversial ‘guilty’ verdict for political activist Alexei Navalny and his brother, in which the interviewee reportedly participated. The interviewee has just mentioned that it was important for her to support this demonstration, and starts to explain why.

Extract 4.9: Protester 13, female, Moscow

- 1 P13 there was a live broadcast of the verdict for Navalny and I-
- 2 YL mmhm
- 3 P13 I saw it and emotionally it jolted me so much
- 4 YL mmhm
- 5 P13 it just knocked me out well m-me (.) personally I was struck by the fact of (.) this humiliation
- 6 YL mm
- 7 P13 because they intentionally publicly broadcast it (.) perform this demonstratively
- 8 YL mmhm
- 9 P13 demonstra- well I mean they show who’s in the driver’s seat (.)
- 10 like *we will humiliate you sit and fear us further*
- 11 YL mmhm
- 12 P13 and for me £ it’s again like a red flag for a bull £ (0.2) and on the one hand there’s a feeling
- 13 of personal powerlessness (.) like *I’ll pop out to the streets alone and then what*[↑]
- 14 YL mmhm
- 15 P13 yeah I mean I (.) wo- won’t free anyone and I don’t want to risk myself
- 16 YL mmhm
- 17 P13 on the one hand I’m not sure what to do
- 18 YL mmhm mmhm
- 19 P13 but at the same time I (0.5) have a categorical inner protest that (.) because of this disrespect
- 20 that they show during that (.) pseudo-court to those two people (.)
- 21 and furthermore that’s a signal to us (.) to myself
- 22 YL mmhm
- 23 P13 disrespect for all of us

P13 begins by mentioning a specific incident, a TV broadcast of the Navalny trial, in a rather neutral manner: ‘there was a live broadcast of the verdict for Navalny’ (line 1). In line 3, the speaker establishes a link between this event and her emotional state. In

particular, she presents it as provoking quite an array of emotional reactions ('I saw it and', line 3), with P13 being 'emotionally ... jolted ... so much' (line 3), 'knocked ... out' (line 5) and 'struck' (line 5). These terms, especially because they are accentuated, display a strong sense of shock, implying that the feelings were unexpected but powerful. Note how the speaker described the actual reason for her emotions: 'I was struck by the fact of (.) this humiliation' (line 5). With this, the neutral 'broadcast' from line 1 is reformulated as 'humiliation', which depicts the event as problematic; being positioned as a 'fact', it also comes across as an accurate perception. In that sense, her actions — taking part in the protest against the guilty verdict — are seen as defending people who are perceived to be treated badly. Reporting her emotional reaction as triggered by a problematic situation thus allows P13 to display the sensible nature of her actions, thus providing the first layer of defence for her motive account.

The second layer of defence is worked up in lines 7-12, where the interviewee occasions intentional nature of humiliation. She does it through emphasising that the trial was broadcast 'intentionally, publicly ... demonstratively' (line 7) in order to 'show who's in the driver's seat' (line 9), thus suggesting that the broadcast had a hidden objective to intimidate people into submission. P13 does not specify who 'they' in lines 7 and 9 are, but the likely candidates are the authorities or perhaps even the state. The verb 'perform' in line 7 is interesting too, as it implies that the court was simply a performance, an exaggerated display of power rather than an actual act of fair judgement, which contributes to idea of a hidden agenda. Furthermore, the utterance in line 10, designed to be heard as reported speech attributed to 'them', displays 'their' obvious desire to intimidate the viewers. Through these formulation, P13 builds a case for treating the authorities as deliberately committing an immoral act of humiliating its citizens. In so doing, she highlights a particularly reprehensible aspect of the problematic situation, which contributes to the appropriateness of her emotional outburst. Indeed, deliberateness of misconduct has been shown to be a powerful resource for establishing accountability of one's own claims and conduct (Drew, 1998), and the speaker in extract 9 uses it to advance the claim that her emotional reaction was a legitimate response to a clearly communicated disrespect.

The causal link between the speaker's feelings and the situation is reinforced in line 19, where P13 explicitly states that her 'categorical inner protest' was 'because of this disrespect'. She upgrades the severity of disrespect by constructing it as relevant on a broader scale, not just as mistreatment of Navalny brothers (line 20), but as 'a signal to us (...) to myself [...] disrespect for all of us' (lines 21, 23). Inclusiveness of this formulation provides for the understanding that even though the trial was, strictly speaking, about two people, it had a much wider significance. In so doing, P13 offers additional inferences about the character of the broadcast trial: that it was the type of incident which could easily provoke a strong emotional response in the broader public including herself and foster the desire to actively protest against it.

Overall, then, the analysis shows how different parts of the account function to warrant the appropriateness of emotional motive for active protest involvement. While the speaker does not make much use of witness entitlement, the general strategy of formulating motive is similar to the first three extracts in this section: the interviewee portrays herself as provoked into action by a particularly troublesome situation, specifically, by the negative feelings such situation generated. Through constructing such causal links, P13 is able to demonstrate that her feelings are essentially rational, which contributes to accountability of her protest involvement.

Before moving to the final extract, I would like to make one tentative suggestion concerning the work done by P13 in lines 12-17. There, she uses a metaphor — 'like a red flag for a bull' — to describe how she felt. Figurative formulations such as this hold certain rhetorical power because they 'compress' a variety of meanings into a succinct and intuitively intelligible expression (Drew & Holt, 1988; Edwards, 2005b). However, formulaic phrases can also be risky because of that, since the speaker does not have much control over the facets of meaning. To illustrate, P13's metaphor can be understood to show that she was enraged and provoked, but it also can be taken to imply that her behaviour was instinctual and without much rational thinking. Within the current conversational context the second implication is damaging, as it can be the basis for accusations of irrationality (Edwards, 1997). In that sense, it is possible to suggest that the comparison of the two attitudes ('on the one hand [...] but at the same time', lines 12, 19)

and avowal of unsureness ('on the one hand I'm not sure what to do', line 17) are resources for displaying the thoughtful and sensible nature of her actions. Built into these accounts is the implication that P13 did not act instinctively or on a whim, but took time to contemplate her options and made an informed decision to act on her 'categorical inner protest' (line 19). As such, the passage can be seen as adding to the overarching rationality of the argument, especially given that it appears after the metaphor that could imply irrationality.

The final extract in this chapter comes from a protester who discusses her participation in the 'Moscow for Everyone' demonstration, aimed against racism and xenophobia. The interviewee continues the discussion by focusing on the motive for her involvement.

Extract 4.10: Protester 42, female, Moscow

- 1 P42 I went because (0.5) well when they try to unite like (.) the country based on hatred
- 2 well it's unacceptable for me
- 3 YL mmhm
- 4 P42 I don't want to become (.) hateful myself nor live in fear for myself for friends for anyone
- 5 (.) well I don't understand why it's needed
- 6 YL mmhm mmhm
- 7 P42 I mean I understand why they need it (.) hh £ I don't understand why I need it £
- 8 YL aha
- 9 P42 and so when (0.5) well (.) I feel such a resentment (.) I was always quite a patriot
- 10 like *yes (.) we do have some objective problems but still*
- 11 and I feel very resentful that for the past two years it's basically taken from me
- 12 YL mmhm
- 13 P42 because I can't be proud of the country where it's allowed to (.) um
- 14 to kick gay people on the streets without any problem and it's um (.) also allowed
- 15 to kill children from the Caucasus without any problem and that's the norm
- 16 YL mmhm
- 17 P42 and the other way around (.) when maybe ethnic diasporas ethnic mafias are allowed to exist
- 18 and it's also the norm so (0.2) for me such state of affairs is simply unacceptable

There are three features of this extract that I would like to discuss. First, P42 makes clear that her motive for protesting stems from her perception of the state of affairs in Russia as problematic (line 1). Specifically, she suggests that the state of affairs is unacceptable, undesired and nonsensical. She repeatedly describes the situation as ‘unacceptable’, first with regard to an attempt to make hatred into a uniting principle (line 2) and then with regard to dubious societal standards (line 18). Another reason for protest is given in line 4, where P42 claims that she does not want to ‘become (.) hateful’ and ‘live in fear’. These disinclinations are formulated in such a way that their intelligibility does not require additional explanation; conventionally, these are things that people would not want. In so doing, P42 strengthens the depiction of the situation in Russia as problematic. Finally, the speaker characterises the situation as nonsensical by displaying her lack of understanding (‘I don’t understand why it’s needed’, line 5; ‘I don’t understand why I need it’, line 7). By attending to various facets of what is wrong with the situation, the interviewee makes the situation appear consistently bad, which makes her desire to address it (by joining the demonstration) more convincing.

Second, similarly to the speaker in extract 9, the interviewee here constructs misconduct as intentional. In line 1, she argues that ‘they try to unite like (.) the country based on hatred’; this formulation implies that ‘they’ are making an effort and are therefore aware of what they are doing. A similar effect is achieved when P42 orients to her understanding that whoever promotes the idea of hatred *needs* it (line 7). In effect, the problematic state of affairs is seen to be a result of conscious planning, and by implication, is more condemnable because it is an expression of malicious intent. Note again that who ‘they’ are is left unspecified. Such ‘not naming’ strategy (Wooffitt, 1992) might be seen as another example of systematic vagueness. Vagueness is advantageous because it enables the interviewees in extracts 9 and 10 to insist that problematic actions are being done deliberately, but it also defends them from dealing with potential challenges of giving specific details. In other words, lack of specificity makes the accounts difficult to probe while preserving their ability to capture the essence of certain moral issues (Potter & Edwards, 1990).

Third, the speaker in extract 10 invokes a negative subjective feeling of resentment (line 9) and justifies it in several ways. In particular, P42 describes herself as being ‘always quite a patriot’ (line 9). This description is effective in two ways. First, it presents P42 in a positive light, as someone who cares for her country. Second, ‘always’ implies that being a patriot is a deep-rooted part of the speaker’s personality. This second implication works to make her resentfulness understandable: because being a patriot is an integral part of who P42 is, losing it (‘it’s basically taken from me’, line 11) is seen as a serious issue. The rhetoric of identity dissolution, not being able to be ‘who one is’, has strong argumentative power (Billig, 1996); it assists P42 in depicting her feeling of resentment as expected, given that she cannot be a patriot any more. Furthermore, resentment is justified on the grounds of her inability to feel proud for Russia (line 13). Explaining this inability, the interviewee makes a list of issues in Russia, such as the existence of uncontrolled mafia (line 17) and open hostility towards gay people and members of ethnic minorities (line 14-15). The actions she orients to are conventionally seen as troubling, because they violate basic human rights and compassion (in particular ‘kill[ing] children from the Caucasus’, line 15). P42 portrays the situation as even more grim, by positioning these behaviours as unquestionable ‘norms’ of Russian society. Such a state of affairs is decidedly not something to be proud of, and as such provides a contextual justification for the interviewee feeling very resentful.

On the basis on these three observations, an already familiar strategy of accounting emerges: P42’s emotional indignation is portrayed as a rational reaction to an injustice ‘out there’. Constructed wrongness of the state of affairs functions to warrant the righteousness of P42’s feelings, in turn bolstering the reasonableness of her protest involvement.

Overall, in contrast to the strategy described in the first section, the extracts above demonstrate a different motive orientation: the power of feeling rather than logic, emphasis on witnessing and moral indignation rather than on instrumental necessity. However, emotional motive accounts are not just flat reports of what one felt; in them, emotion talk is an integral part of rational accountability (Edwards, 1997). That is, the emotional states are described so as to demonstrate their solid rational foundation. In their

descriptions, interviewees draw upon the idea that certain states of affairs are problematic and witnessing them ‘naturally’ inflicts negative feelings. In turn, such feelings are portrayed as legitimate grounds for active resistance.

Discussion

This chapter explored the construction of a motive for active protest involvement as an interactional accomplishment. Specifically, it investigated how protesters formulate ‘instrumental’ and ‘emotion’ arguments in talk about active protest participation.

Confirming the suggestion made in the introduction, the analysis demonstrated that the interviewees generally talked in ways that justified their active protest involvement as legitimate. I identified two main strategies of accounting, which I called ‘instrumental’ and ‘emotional’. In the first strategy, motives were formulated with respect to the obligational and instrumental nature of protesting. Speakers portrayed the state of affairs around them as highly problematic and thus as requiring attention, and protest was implied to be the natural way to address it. Protest involvement was also described as selfless and moral behaviour, motivated by the desire to help others. In the second strategy, motives were structured around negative emotional experiences that speakers claimed to have. This involved orienting to specific flaws of the system and portraying them as legitimately provoking moral shock. In both strategies, interviewees used various discursive devices to make their claims convincing, such as category entitlement, ‘if-then’ formulations and systematic vagueness.

Although the two argumentative strategies were conceptualised as distinct, there was an important commonality. Across the extracts, the motives and behaviours they led to were characterised as inherently rational. Even in invoking emotional bases of mobilisation, speakers attended to its rationality, by manufacturing moral outrage as a logical response to transgressions of justice. This finding is in line with some previous discursive research. For example, Nepstad and Smith (2001) found similar constructions of rational emotions in their study of activists in the Central American peace movement. Their respondents too depicted protest as motivated by deep moral indignation, which in

turn was shown to arise as a result of witnessing unjust conduct and lies of the government in Central America. Furthermore, Young (2001) and Warren (2010) found similar constructions in the reports of activists belonging to slavery abolition movement and antiracist movement, respectively. This evidence suggests that scholars of protest need to reconsider the existent divisions between emotions and rationality, and focus instead on the various ways in which emotion and logic can be discursively interlaced.

My analysis, however, goes beyond reproducing the findings of other studies on protest, and provides additional insights about the nature of protest in Russia. The idea of cultural vocabularies of motive is helpful here. In his classic work on motive imputation, Mills (1940) argued that motives were the explanations that people deemed appropriate for specific contexts. For Mills, this was precisely the reason why certain motives were verbalised more often than others, and why certain features were shared across different explanations. He called such patterns ‘working vocabulary’ of motive, and suggested that they could act as illustrations of a typical motive, for a given action, in a given context. Similarly to the majority of DP researchers, Mills was not concerned with whether such motives were ‘true’ or ‘false’; rather, he offered to see typical motives as ‘windows’ to the social order of a specific society. Articulated, motive was seen as producing a norm, with which the motive-giver urged his counterpart to agree (cf. Billig, 1991; 1996). In that way, Mills argued, motives were tools of social influence.

Following these ideas, it can be suggested that in their interviews, my respondents were building such working vocabularies of motive. The two types of motivational accounts identified in this chapter can thus be understood as strategies that participants think particularly effective for addressing the situation at hand, i.e. providing legitimate explanations as to why it was important for them to become actively involved in protests in Russia (according to the interviewer’s question). As such, analytic findings can tell us something important about the social order in Russia. In particular, they suggest that it is important for protesters to convince their listeners that their active protest involvement was a *rational choice*, and consider it as moral and altruistic act. Why might this be? It can be suggested that this tactic addresses specific normative concerns. To understand which ones, we need to look closely at the discourses associated with protest in Russia.

It has been noted that stories of active protest involvement in Russia are told within largely unsympathetic cultural assumptions, which are often actively promoted by the official media: that protesters are careless, unpatriotic, West-paid city-dwellers who ‘rock the boat’ of stability in seeking personal economic gains and favours (Clément, 2013; Sakwa, 2015). Another, but equally disparaging, discourse is of protesters as people who are simply brainwashed into protesting by the evil protest leaders obsessed with personal power. As an illustration, being on state TV, Vladimir Putin has famously described protesters as ‘bandarlogs’, comparing them to Rudyard Kipling’s foolish monkeys who were hypnotised by the powerful python Kaa (White, 2013; naturally, Putin did not care to specify who Kaa might be). It is possible that argumentative strategies that I identified in my analysis are ways of implicitly attending to, and dealing with, such negative portrayals. For example, through downplaying the importance of self-centred and gain-seeking motives, the protesters can be seen inoculating themselves against the stereotype that they are paid for taking part in protest. In particular, claims of having a ‘duty’ to protest in order to help others counter the often-articulated idea that people who went to the streets were only concerned about themselves (Aron, 2013). Most importantly, depiction of protest involvement as a rational choice attends to, and counters, the ‘brainwashed’ image, establishing protesters as active agents in their own right. So one potential answer to why rationality in motivational accounts appears to be a paramount concern is because protesters operate in the context where protest participation is often presented as not normative and problematic. My analysis hence offers evidence that respondents are sensitive to negative depictions of them circulating in society, and resist these through talk. As such, working vocabularies of motive are joint productions that are attuned to both conversational issues at hand and to the broader societal issues, and might be used to alter socio-political perceptions within the society.

At a more theoretical level, my analysis also makes several contributions to the research on social psychology of protest, in particular to the dual pathway model of protest mobilisation (van Zomeren et al., 2004; van Zomeren et al., 2008). To briefly reiterate from the literature review chapter, in his classic work on protest Klandermans (1997) observed that people often get upset or angry over certain situations, but these emotions

do not result in active protest engagement. He suggested that this is because people perceive themselves as having little efficacy: as they see themselves powerless to make a change, going to the streets loses its significance, and people remain uninvolved. Such explanation prioritises efficacy over emotion. In turn, van Zomeren and colleagues (2004) proposed that emotion mobilisation does not need to be seen in such close proximity to efficacy, and, in fact, might constitute a distinct pathway to protest mobilisation. Based on this idea, van Zomeren et al. developed their dual pathway model, which presupposes two separate pathways to protest engagement: ‘efficacy pathway’ reflecting problem-based coping, and ‘anger pathway’ reflecting emotion-focused coping. While my analysis certainly did not set out to ‘test’ this model, the findings offer an intriguing possibility to relate to it. A word of caution here is that from the position of the classic dual pathway model, people’s accounts are seen as linguistic expressions of inner cognitive states, while discursive psychology rejects this view and respecifies cognitive states as functional interactive resources (Edwards, 1997). And yet, cognitive and discursive approaches do not need to be incompatible: as was rightly observed by Benford (1993, p. 209), ‘structural and interpretative approaches may be complimentary rather than contradictory’. In this way, my analysis can fruitfully contribute to cognitive models by furnishing them with specific meanings and showing how they might play out *in situ* rather than in theory, thus facilitating a better understanding of protest mobilisation (cf. Simon et al., 1998). With these considerations in mind, I would like to discuss two contributions.

First, I suggest that the arguments explored in the first section of this chapter can be useful for furnishing efficacy pathway, while the arguments in the second section can be fruitfully related to anger pathway. Efficacy pathway is linked to instrumental treatment of problematic situations. In theory, it is assumed that people who follow the efficacy route to mobilisation perceive the state of affairs around them as unsatisfactory and attempt to remedy it by joining protest. In that way, there is a clear causal relation between cognition and behaviour: people’s perceptions prompt them into action. What my analysis can add to this theoretical conceptualisation is an illustration of various ways in which the link between the situation and action mobilisation can be constructed in talk. For example, the analysis suggests that situations are strategically described as

unsatisfactory or even dangerous, so that acting upon them is seen as logical (as in extract 4). Arguments that draw on duty and common sense appear to be consistently used for this (extract 5). These can be accompanied by the invocation of social identities that normatively predispose one to act, such as ‘historian’ in extract 2. Importantly, social categories can be invoked implicitly, as in extract 1, where P31 implies that his duty as a parent is to improve the situation so that his child can live in a better country. My data thus show that causal links between situations and protest mobilisation are indeed salient, but not in a given objective sense: rather, causality is an achievement, something that is actively manufactured by protesters in talk.

The second contribution concerns the anger pathway. Van Zomeren’s model proposes that protest mobilisation is condition by group-based anger resulting from appraising the group situation as unfair. Furthermore, the politicised collective identity model also stresses the importance of anger for transforming collective identities and facilitating social actions (Simon & Klandermans, 2001; Stürmer & Simon, 2009). I would like to argue, however, that the focus does not need to be on anger alone. Indeed, van Zomeren and colleagues themselves at one point suggested that in theory any emotion can be equally important. While it has been argued that anger is an action-oriented emotion (Mackie, Devos & Smith, 2000; Smith, 1993) and is thus efficient for engaging people, orientations to anger as a motive for active protest involvement were very rarely used among my interviewees. Instead, as the analysis demonstrates, the emphasis was made on feeling ‘resentful’ (extracts 8 and 10), emotionally ‘struck’ (extracts 7 and 9) and ‘offended’ (extract 6). These emotional descriptions construct and sustain a sense of moral shock, which is a helpful resource for accounting for initial mobilisation (Jasper, 2008). This is perhaps because from a rhetorical vantage point the word ‘anger’ has properties that can be detrimental to certain motive-related arguments. For example, being ‘angry’ relates easily to the feeling of being victimised and helpless (Warner, 1986). Such implications can be damaging to the justifications of protest as instrumental for improving the state of affairs, because they contradict the claim of efficacy. In addition, Warner pointed out that anger had been traditionally seen as a self-centred emotion. As my analysis shows, the significant characteristic of both instrumental and emotional

argumentation is their other-related orientation; referring to ‘anger’ as an explanatory emotion would be unproductive for such constructions. Finally, anger often appears to be directly linked to aggression and aggressive behaviour, which is generally frowned upon in modern societies (Jasper, 2014). In terms of accountability of protest involvement, being seen as aggressive is certainly an implication to avoid in Russia, especially given that after the infamous May 2012 Bolotnaya Square protest, the state propaganda started to capitalise on the image of aggressive protesters as a threat to the police and the public (Fomina, 2012; Greene, 2012). Indeed, some of my participants explicitly commented on this connotation of the term ‘angry’ and resisted it. For example, consider this extract that shows the reaction of one of the participants to the interviewer’s suggestion that protesters can be characterised as ‘angry’:

Extract 4.11: Protester 3, female, Moscow

- 1 YL it’s just (0.5) I heard the description angry citizens somewhere
- 2 P3 yeah but (0.2) well I don’t really like the term angry
- 3 YL mmhm
- 4 P3 because I (0.2) I don’t feel any anger (0.5) I mean there’s no (.)
- 5 nothing (0.2) there is no aggression in my protesting

Overall, then, an important contribution of my analysis to the broader socio-psychological literature on protest concerns the fact that there are subtleties in both instrumental and emotional mobilisation pathways, which can easily be overlooked. Such subtleties are not examined in detail within cognitive models that strive to come up with generic explanations of behaviour. Applying findings from a more micro-level approach can enrich such models (respecifying them to a degree, Edwards & Potter, 2005) and provide a more nuanced understanding of the role of efficacy and emotions in protest mobilisation.

So far, the empirical chapters in this thesis have focused on the arguments that can be seen to attend to the ‘entry points’ of social protest: explanations of becoming politically interested and of becoming an active participant in protest. The next chapter

builds upon these analyses and turns to the topic of protester identity, exploring what it means for protesters to be a part of the opposition movement, and the meanings of ‘the opposition’ itself.

Chapter 5. ‘It’s a very broad concept’: negotiating oppositional identity and belonging

So far in this thesis, I have analysed a variety of arguments relating to the acquisition of political interest, and explored interactional construction of motives for becoming actively involved in protest. This chapter extends the analysis further, by focusing on another element traditionally associated with protest mobilisation — identity. In particular, my analysis is concerned with interactional negotiation of oppositional belonging and with the meanings that protesters attach to the category of ‘opposition’ itself.

In the literature and the media, the label of ‘opposition’ is often used unproblematically, as an umbrella term to describe protesters (Artem’ev, 2011; “Opposition takes to the streets”, 2013). However, some observers have warned against using this label in such a way. For example, Lobanova and Semenov (2015) argued that the groups and individuals who took part in demonstrations are too heterogeneous to be called ‘the opposition’. Similarly, Gel’man (2015) suggested that being labelled as ‘political opposition’ might be problematic for some protesters in Russia, especially for those who consider themselves civic, and not political, activists. Likewise, in an edited collection that explored local social movements in Russia, Clément and colleagues (2013) maintained that calling the protest movement in Russia ‘oppositional’ has the risk of casting it as predominantly political, which is not always the case. Indeed, the authors found that out of the six protest case studies they explored, not one had characterised itself as ‘political’.

Along with ‘the opposition’, academic literature contains other labels that are used to describe protesters in Russia. For example, Greene (2012; 2013) used the term ‘ordinary activists’ to denote participants who are not politicians or professional protest campaigners. He also referred to protesters as ‘hipsters’⁷ (2013, p. 48), ‘twenty-something, young, cosmopolitan urbanites’ who, he argued, constituted the most representative

⁷ It is interesting to mention that in my data respondents actively resisted the label of ‘hipster’, referring to its depreciatory connotations (the extracts are not shown in this thesis).

community in the 2011-2012 wave of protests. Gel'man (2015) favoured the description 'civil activist', although he suggested that in 2011 civil activists became aligned with the more politicised opposition, which effectively portrayed them as the part of 'the opposition'. In addition, some studies seem to solve the labelling issue by characterising protesters based on their occupational and demographic characteristics. For instance, Robertson (2013) referred to his participants in terms of their occupation, age and gender. Gontmakher and Ross (2015) conceptualised oppositional belonging in terms of class and used the label of 'middle class citizens'. Furthermore, in a comprehensive overview, Volkov (2012a) used a variety of labels to describe protesters, such as 'politician', 'journalist', 'poet' and, most frequently, 'civil activist'.

Overall then, there appears to be a general lack of agreement on how to label protest participants and, indeed, on how they label themselves. Very little is known about how protesters themselves understand the term 'opposition', whether this label is relevant for them and, if so, where they would like to be seen in relation to 'the opposition'. While the researchers agree that 'lay', unaffiliated protesters comprise the largest proportion of the 'opposition' and hence should be an important object of investigation (Robertson, 2011; Volkov, 2012b), their views and arguments rarely constitute the topic of interest in itself. I argue that such inattentiveness limits our understanding of the Russian protest by omitting the voices of protesters and automatically including them into, or excluding them from, 'the opposition'. Importantly, the neglect of protesters' accounts prevents us from learning what the protest culture means to its (supposed) members (cf. Widdicombe & Wooffitt, 1995). Arguing for the need to explore protesters' accounts, I do not intend to come up with one 'true' meaning of the opposition or its contents. Rather, I would like to show that the matters of oppositional belonging might be not as relevant to protesters as they are to the researchers of protest; and if they are, that there are multiple ways that belonging can be negotiated. In other words, the aim of this chapter is to explore how the phenomenon of 'the opposition' is brought to life by protesters, in their own terms.

Two additional considerations suggest that paying closer attention to people's own self-categorisations is important. First, research from the social psychology demonstrates that exploration of 'identity politics' is paramount for our understanding of contentious

behaviour. The concept of identity is central to social-psychological research on collective action (Della Porta & Diani, 2006; Klandermans, 1997). More specifically, studies within the framework of the Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) show that subjective belonging has the potential to mobilise people to protest and sustain it. In their seminal paper, Simon et al. (1998) suggested that even though protest actions are performed by individuals, protesters act on behalf of relevant social groups. Be it identification with a specific collective movement, or a more broad opinion group, such as being ‘pro’ or ‘against’ something (cf. Bliuc et al., 2007), social psychologists agree that group membership is a highly significant factor, and deserves extensive attention both as quantitative (as statistical predictor) and qualitative (as subjective understanding of belonging) phenomenon. This means that asking questions regarding whom protesters identify with, and how they perceive themselves, is important, as it sheds light on the very mechanics of protest behaviour.

Second, it is well known that different categories have different connotations, and that labels are discursively not neutral. For example, calling a person a ‘terrorist’ or a ‘freedom fighter’ has important and contrasting practical consequences (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Ample research from the tradition of conversation and discourse analyses (Edwards & Potter, 2000) and membership categorisation analysis (Stokoe, 2012) demonstrates the practical value of paying close attention to labels that people use to describe themselves and others. This research demonstrates that labels are strategically used to justify actions; such justifications are particularly important in the context of contentious struggles. Indeed, a number of researchers have explored how multiple, and often competing, social identities are constructed by various protest groups. For example, Hopkins and Kahani-Hopkins (2004), in their rhetorical analysis of British Muslim activists’ identities showed how, in talk, the activists attended to issues of territorial integrity in warranting their collective identity as *ummah*, meaning the global Islamic community, and, in so doing, affirmed the struggle for their political rights and interests as legitimate. These authors also demonstrated how the opponents of such struggle undermined the protesters’ collective identity and their actions through prioritising the understanding of *ummah* as the global community of people across the globe, regardless

of their religion. Similarly, Bassiouney (2012) focused on the relationship between language and identity, in examining how the identities of the protesters from the Tahrir Square in Egypt were discursively negotiated in the media. She showed how the supporters of the revolution warranted their identities as rightful protesters and ‘true Egyptians’ and at the same time resisted the harmful labels of careless ‘rebels’ and foreign-sponsored ‘false Egyptians’. With regard to the more ‘conventional’ oppositional identifications, Stuart et al. (2013) showed that the identity of a ‘protester’ can be resisted, by discounting it as too moderate and disempowering. Exploring the identities of the activists of the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, a radical organisation fighting against whaling, Stuart and colleagues found that its members rejected the identity of ‘protesters’ in favour of more paradoxical labels, such as ‘noncriminal pirates’ and ‘gentle terrorists’. Stuart and colleagues proposed that asserting such seemingly absurd identities helped the Sea Shepherds to emphasise the uniqueness of their organisation. Furthermore, Bobel (2007) argued that the category of an ‘activist’, being discursively associated with a romanticised image of a tireless and selfless individual, could entail damaging consequences for those who unproblematically accepted it. Based on his interviews with protesters in the US, Bobel showed that such idealised discursive images were the reason why the identity of an ‘activist’ was actively rejected even by the core social movement members.

This brief review demonstrates that categorising oneself and others is far more than just simple communication of one’s thoughts; rather, it is an important strategic achievement. Categorisation does things: identity categories can be flexibly used by protesters to accomplish a variety of actions, for example, to justify a group’s protest behaviour or to refute negative cultural perceptions. Such ‘category work’ cannot be studied theoretically; it requires fine-grained analysis of participants’ accounts. Although more and more scholars embrace such discursive-oriented stance in their analyses of the protests in the West and the countries of the Arab Spring (Al-Saleh, 2015; Smith, Thomas & McGarty, 2015; Polletta, 2006), there are still very few studies that look at the conversational categorisation done by protesters in Russia. This chapter thus addresses the

gaps in the previous research and extends the previous analyses by focusing on the arguments protesters make about the nature of the opposition and their relations with it.

Method

The majority of extracts in this chapter come from the collection of interviewer-solicited accounts of oppositional belonging, produced in response to the various questions concerning the opposition. Because the interviews were semi-structured, a range of questions was employed to elicit interviewees' accounts. For example, I asked the respondents about their oppositional membership directly, using such questions as 'are you a part of the opposition?', 'would you consider yourself a part of the opposition?' and 'what is your relation to the opposition?' I also asked questions about the meaning of the opposition, such as 'what is opposition for you?' and 'what do you mean by opposition?' Even though the latter questions do not ask interviewees to comment on their own oppositional belonging, a number of respondents did so; these accounts were thus also included in the chapter (extracts 2, 3, 9 and 13). One account (separated for analytic convenience into two extracts, 11 and 14) has been taken from a collection of extracts in which discussions of the opposition appeared spontaneously within the flow of the interviewees' talk, without being prompted by the interviewer. In the chosen instance of spontaneous 'oppositional belonging' talk, the original question is not included, as it is on a different topic and sequentially rather removed from the account under investigation.

Specific extracts were chosen based on the results of initial analysis, which revealed a variety of patterns of affirming and resisting oppositional membership. Certain patterns appeared to be more pronounced than others; that is, they occurred repeatedly across the extracts. The extracts that best exemplified such patterns were noted and selected for more detailed analysis. They were translated and transcribed in accordance with CA conventions. I then separated the extracts into four groups, according to the particular means through which oppositional identities were affirmed/resisted: accepting the opposition by claiming possession of criterial attributes, accepting but delimiting oppositional membership by describing specific features associated with that membership,

rejecting the opposition on the grounds of not possessing the ‘right’ attitudes and motives, and rejecting opposition as the wrong word. This chapter examines these four strategies in turn, starting with the practice of affirming oppositional membership through invoking criterial attributes.

1. ‘The opposition are those who are not satisfied’: accomplishing oppositional membership by claiming possession of criterial attributes

In this section, I explore how protesters affirm their oppositional affiliation on the basis of determining what ‘the opposition’ generally is. In the following two extracts, the interviewees are asked about being part of the opposition, and about their understanding of the word ‘opposition’, respectively. In the first extract, the question is asked towards the end of a long narrative about the interviewee’s dissatisfaction with the political situation in Russia.

Extract 5.1: Protester 1, male, Moscow

- 1 YL are you a part of the opposition or?
- 2 (0.5)
- 3 what is your relation to the opposition?
- 4 (0.6)
- 5 P1 well (0.2) the opposition are (.) those- those who are not satisfied with (.)
- 6 °political (.) regimes° therefore yes
- 7 YL mmhm [you are part of the opposition
- 8 P1 [I am the opposition yes

Extract 5.2: Protester 13, female, Moscow

- 1 YL and opposition (.) what’s this word for you (.) what do you mean by opposition?
- 2 P13 well (.) basically the opposition- (0.2) well if we treat it as a neutral word
- 3 YL mmhm
- 4 P13 it’s (0.6) um (0.8) well it’s either a phenomenon or a group of people

- 5 YL mmhm
- 6 P13 who have (.) um (0.8) contrary (0.6) um views (0.6) so to speak to that (.) elite
- 7 YL mmhm
- 8 P13 and (0.2) the regime who is currently at the helm
- 9 YL mmhm
- 10 P13 therefore if like today the communists were- the Communist Party was in power
- 11 YL mmhm
- 12 P13 I would also be .hh the opposition yeah
- 13 YL mmhm mmhm
- 14 P13 because (.) my views don't match their views completely

There appear to be two parts in the accounts above. In the first part, a definition of opposition is being constructed. In extract 1, this is done by characterising the opposition as ‘those who are not satisfied with (.) political (.) ‘regimes’ (lines 5-6). In so doing, P1 links an attitude to a category, constructing a category-tied predicate (Stokoe, 2012). Since categories are inference-rich (Sacks, 1992), they can be associated with a range of category predicates, such as activities, motives, expectations, rights and obligations and so on. In the extract above, ‘the opposition’ is associated with dissatisfaction with the regime: this attitude is thus constructed as criterial. In extract 2, the speaker draws on the interviewer’s question in producing a definition: the question in line 1 occasions opposition as a ‘word’ (line 1) and enquires about its meaning, therefore offering a good opportunity for definition-giving. P13 uses it and describes the opposition as a ‘group of people [...] who have (.) um (0.8) contrary (0.6) um views [...] to that (.) elite’ (lines 4, 6). Such a definition similarly orients to a concrete category-tied feature — the sense of disagreement with the ruling regime. Note that P13 also attends to the credibility of the definition produced. In line 2, she starts a description — ‘basically the opposition- (0.2)’ — but then stops and formulates a condition (‘well if we treat it as a neutral word’). This design works to present the upcoming definition as impartial, based on the nature of the word itself rather than on anything else, like P13’s own understanding. In that way, the respondent removes the subjective dimension occasioned in the interviewer’s question (‘what’s this word *for you* (.) what *do you* mean’, line 1, my emphasis), hence building up the definition as objectively credible.

In the second part of their accounts, speakers warrant their membership in the category of opposition. Both of them use connective ‘therefore’ (1:6; 2:10) to imply a link between the definition and the subsequent claim of membership. Specifically, in extract 1 the interviewee says ‘therefore yes [...] I am the opposition yes’ (lines 6, 8). With this, his membership in the category of the opposition is made relevant on the basis of sharing an attitude. Recall that within the interactional context, P1’s own dissatisfaction with the government in Russia has already been made clear, and is a part of the shared knowledge between him and the interviewer before the question in line 1 is asked. P1 thus does not need to explicitly state that he too is dissatisfied in order to make his claim work. His oppositional affiliation is accounted for on the grounds of his possessing a criterial attitude.

The interviewee in the second extract occasions her oppositional membership in a more implicit way, by describing a hypothetical scenario using an ‘if-then’ formulation. In particular, P13 says ‘if like today the communists were- the Communist Party was in power’ (line 10), ‘[then] I would also be .hh the opposition’ (line 12). Note how the ‘then’ part implicitly asserts the fact of belonging: the emphasis on ‘also’ suggests that P13 is *already* in opposition. It can be inferred that, similar to the communists, ‘the regime who is currently at the helm’ (line 8) does not match her views either; she attends to this inference in line 14 in stating that her views ‘don’t match’ the views of the ruling government. In so doing, P13 confirms the possession of the attitude presented as criterial for the opposition earlier, thereby justifying her claim of oppositional belonging.

So while the interviewees accept the membership in the category of opposition, they do so in a rather indirect, but neat way. Note, for example, that in case of P1, indication of membership could have come after the first interviewer’s question, which directly invites the interviewee to accept or reject it (‘are you a’, 1:1). P1, however, avoids providing an upfront categorisation of himself. Instead, after the second more open-ended question, he develops a definition of the category and *then* makes a membership claim. The second interviewee does a similar thing: she delivers her implicit affiliation statement after she has produced a definition. The advantage of such design is in its ability to highlight the logic of identity ascription — through depicting one as ‘fitting’ the definition — thereby justifying claims of membership.

A final point here is that both speakers orient to the delicacy of the topic. This is done, first, by prefacing the answers with ‘well’ (1:5; 2:2); as mentioned before, such design has been shown to be a powerful rhetorical device for producing the topic of talk as sensitive (Schegloff & Lerner, 2009). Second, there are several pauses and hesitations in both extracts, which tend to accompany conversations about sensitive topics (Sidnell, 2010); most notably in extract 1 where the answer is delayed (lines 2 and 4). In the case of the second speaker, her ‘analogical’ if-then description is rather indirect, and thus might be seen as a way to make the topic discernibly ‘delicate’ (Lerner, 2013).

The next extract shows similar delicacy orientations and demonstrates a variation of what appears to be the same strategy of warranting oppositional membership.

Extract 5.3: Protester 3, female, Moscow

- 1 YL and what’s opposition for you?
- 2 (0.8)
- 3 for you personally, how do you understand this word?
- 4 (1.2)
- 5 P3 well it’s a rather (.) for me for some reason it’s a very broad concept
- 6 YL mmhm
- 7 P3 because I consider myself um (0.8) a part of this concept .hh
- 8 YL mmhm
- 9 P3 although I don’t do (0.2) anything particularly active
- 10 YL mmhm
- 11 P3 I think these are people who (.) um at this particular historical moment (.) in Russia
- 12 the opposition- (.) um (0.2) people who consider themselves opposition are those
- 13 who want um (.) some change and reforms
- 14 YL mmhm
- 15 P3 um (0.2) political, reforms
- 16 YL mmhm
- 17 P3 of various um (.) systems, such as education (0.2) electoral system
- 18 YL mmhm
- 19 P3 medical (.) judicial system I mean (.) nearly all parts of our life here need a change
((some lines omitted – she says that there are some people who do not want change))

- 20 P3 I'm interested in what's going on here and here are my friends, family (.)
21 YL mmhm
22 P3 I don't plan to move but I'd really want a change

Similarly to the speaker in extract 2, the interviewee here answers the question about her understanding of the opposition. She does it in such a way as to construct and justify her oppositional identity. However, instead of formulating a 'neutral' definition first and then confirming her membership on the basis of this, P3 makes an identity claim upfront. She does it by stating that for her the opposition is 'a very broad concept' (line 5) and that she considers herself to be 'a part of this concept' (line 7).

The claim of oppositional belonging is then justified in two ways.

First, using the strategy we saw above, P3 does it through displaying possession of a criterial attitude. In line 11-13, she offers a definition of the kind of people who would call themselves the opposition. This in turn enables her to tie the desire for 'some change and reforms' to being 'the opposition' and occasion it as a criterial attribute. She then indicates that her own attitude matches this, by suggesting that 'nearly all parts of our life here need a change' (line 19). Although she does not explicitly present this as her view, this can be inferred from the reference to 'our life here'. Furthermore, she formulates a more explicit account of her position in line 22, saying 'I'd really want a change'. The accentuated modalising term 'really' contributes to making this claim more convincing, by characterising it as sincere (Pomerantz, 1986). In effect, the authenticity of P3's oppositional affiliation is warranted on the basis of her having the desire for change, which is presented as the criterion for being the opposition.

Second, P3 justifies her affiliation through attending to potential challenges. In line 9, the speaker makes clear that her relative lack of action does not affect her oppositional belonging, thus preempting a likely challenge to her identity claim. It can be conventionally expected from people who call themselves 'the opposition' to be active. P3, however, is able to avoid dealing with such a claim on the grounds of her *subjective* understanding of the opposition being broad ('for me [...] it's a very broad concept', line 5). In other words, because she has already grounded her subjective understanding of the

opposition, P3 does not need to ‘fit’ into any ‘conventional’ understanding. In addition, ‘considering’ oneself to be something is different from ‘being’ this something: the interviewee’s formulation here comes across as a subjective preference rather than a factual claim. While subjectivity is often seen as a threat to the reliability of accounts, it can also make an account stronger, as personal feelings and thoughts are private matters that are difficult to challenge (Edwards, 2007; Verkuyten & de Wolf, 2002). The display of subjectivity therefore defends P3 from a potential charge of being too passive to be called the opposition and warrants her authenticity as a member of this category.

Overall, then, this extract demonstrates how the strategy of claiming possession of a criterial attribute can blend in with subjectivity work, and how both of these can be used by speakers to deal with issues of accountability. The last observation I would like to make is that, in a similar way to the extracts above, the topic of opposition is occasioned by P3 as sensitive through some features of the account. Most notably, the interviewee shows resistance to the questions by keeping silent in places where a response would be expected from her, after the interviewer’s questions in lines 2 and 4. In addition, the affirmation of category affiliation is done in an indirect manner, as affiliation with the ‘concept’ (line 7) rather than, say, with ‘the opposition’ itself.

To summarise, this section has explored how protesters can assert their oppositional identity through claiming attributes that have been shown to be constitutive of the category ‘opposition’. This descriptive strategy works by ensuring that membership belonging is seen as ‘natural’, provided that the way one feels is displayed as isomorphic to the way the opposition feels. However, the analysis has also indicated that the claims of membership are muted in several ways. This observation suggests that there is something problematic about the question of opposition category membership.

2. 'Yes (.) to some extent': warranting oppositional affiliation by delimiting membership

Another pattern of accomplishing oppositional membership is through specifying the nature or partial extent of one's oppositional involvement. The following two extracts provide an illustration.

Extract 5.4: Protester 32, male, Volgograd

- 1 YL would you call yourself an oppositioner?
2 P32 well .hh (.) how should I put it (.) yes of course (0.2) but (.) a systemic one for now
3 'cos like we of course did some (.) funny protest actions like hanging banners
4 YL mmhm
5 P32 drawing graffiti (0.2) it was good if you look for them I guess some are still around

Extract 5.5: Protester 26, male, Saint Petersburg

- 1 YL would you call yourself a part of the opposition?
2 (0.5)
3 P26 myself part of the opposition?
4 YL aha mmhm
5 P26 well (.) yes (.) to some extent (.) when I take part in some (.) activities
6 YL mmhm mmhm
7 P26 but now (0.2) I hardly do anything
8 YL mmhm
9 P26 that's it (.)

Both interviewees start by confirming their oppositional membership: P32 says 'yes of course' (4:2) and P26 too says 'yes' (5:5). Note that although the participants affirm the membership, this is not immediate or direct. P32's answer is hesitant: it is prefaced with 'well', 'how should I put it' and some laughter (4:2). In extract 5, there is a delay in responding (pause in line 2), repetition of the question ('myself part of the opposition?' line 3), and hesitation ('well (.)', line 5). So while affiliation with the

opposition is confirmed, there are features suggesting that oppositional identity is in some way problematic.

Moreover, the speakers immediately modify their affirmations of membership. P32 does this through specifying the nature of his opposition ('yes of course (0.2) but a systemic one for now', 4:2). The speaker in extract 5 suggests that he can only be called opposition 'to some extent' (line 5). Respondents also specify the grounds on which they claim their membership, through describing activities conventionally associated with the opposition — protesting (Ekman & Amnå, 2012). For example, in extract 4, the interviewee accounts for being a member of the 'systemic opposition' by explaining 'cos like we of course did some (.) funny protest actions like hanging banners [...] drawing graffiti' (lines 3, 5). Similarly, P26 in extract 5 specifies circumstances in which he can be called a part of the opposition ('when I take part in some (.) activities', line 5). Through these formulations, speakers make their oppositional belonging contingent upon specific adversarial actions: by claiming to have engaged in protest, they achieve and delimit their membership.

So while these accounts also rely on invoking a criterial attribute — both speakers display their understanding of protesting as attributed to the category of 'opposition' — their design is notably different from the extracts I analysed in the first section. The first strategy has the general pattern 'opposition-related question — definition (opposition has a criterial attribute) — affirmation (I have criterial attribute, therefore yes)', while this strategy follows the pattern 'opposition-related question — affirmation, delimiting (yes, but/when attribute) — (implied as criterial attribute)'. In other words, the idea of criterial attribute is mobilised in a different way.

Another distinct feature of this second strategy is lowering commitment to the category of opposition. Note how the descriptions of the speaker's oppositional activities are muted. For instance, protest activities are described as 'funny' in extract 4, and therefore not serious or effective. Moreover, the example of the actions P32 gives can imply a lesser commitment, since 'hanging banners' and 'drawing graffiti' (4:3, 5) are inferred to be a 'softer' variety of protest actions than, say, joining a street demonstration. Furthermore, it is implied that oppositional membership is less relevant now than it was

in the past. The speaker in extract 4 expresses it through using past tense when he talks about his protest participation ('we of course did', line 3; 'it was good', line 5). P26, too, minimises his current protest involvement ('but now (0.2) I hardly do anything', 5:7) in implicit contrast to the past. These formulations lower interviewees' current commitment to the category of opposition and suggest there are problems in affirming oppositional identity which are managed by specifying grounds for membership and playing down commitment.

The next extract similarly demonstrates the elements of delimiting when the interviewee engages in the delicate business of negotiating her oppositional membership; however, the 'attribution talk' there is solicited by the interviewer who asks what makes the speaker a part of the opposition.

Extract 5.6: Protester 42, female, Moscow

- 1 YL would you call yourself a part of the opposition?
- 2 (0.4)
- 3 P42 at the moment yes
- 4 YL mmhm and what's this (.) in you that makes you a part of the opposition?
- 5 (0.4)
- 6 P42 um well I don't agree with the agenda (.) that's currently adopted um by the government
- 7 and (0.2) well this alone already (.) makes me the opposition
- 8 YL mmhm mmhm
- 9 P42 having said that I (.) I'm against um this radical opposition (.) that undoubtedly exists
- 10 and in large quantities um (.) I think that basically (.) all my opposition is just
- 11 in that I think that I can like (.) influence
- 12 YL mmhm
- 13 P42 life of my country and my city (.) in that I want to make a choice myself and not to have
- 14 it made for me (.) yeah and in that (.) I want something that the government doesn't allow
- 15 YL mmhm mmhm
- 16 P42 that's why I don't agree with what's happening now (.) with that utter unaccountability
- 17 yeah (.) and (0.5) thi- already this makes me the opposition which is rather strange
- 18 YL aha aha
- 19 P42 I believe these are normal like human (.) wants but at the moment I guess

In line 2, P42 affirms opposition category affiliation; however, the way it is delivered attenuates the affirmation. First, 'yes' is prefaced with 'at the moment', which limits the applicability of her claim by depicting membership as temporary. Second, the answer is given after a pause. Hesitations and tentativeness after the category-related question have been noted in a number of extracts above, and seem to be resources for demonstrating the delicate nature of the topic. In the case of P42, it is perhaps her tentative acceptance that solicits the interviewer's probe about the basis of her affiliation ('what's this (.) in you that makes you a part of the opposition?' line 4).

There are three notable features of the interviewee's response to that probe.

First, P42 further delimits her membership by orienting to the temporary character of the situation. For example, she says 'I don't agree with the agenda (.) that's *currently* adopted' (line 6), 'I don't agree with what's happening *now*' (line 16), '*at the moment* I guess I belong' (line 19, emphases added). Constructed in that way, her claims provide a further way to furnish her initial assertion of oppositional membership as valid 'at the moment' (line 3). P42 thus grounds the understanding that her oppositional belonging is circumstantial.

Second, the interviewee orients to a set of subjective attitudes and positions them as criterial for the opposition. Specifically, she reports that disagreeing with the government 'already (.) makes me the opposition' (line 7). This formulation creates the impression that P42's status as opposition is inevitable given her attitude; it thus constructs a link between P42's attitude and the category of opposition, displaying the former as the category-bound feature. Plus, the expression 'makes me' (*de laet menya*) can be heard to suggest that her disagreement in some way 'forces' P42 to be the opposition, which contributes to the 'criterial' status of this attitude.

Third, the respondent reduces her commitment to the category of opposition. She does it by making clear that she does not support (hence belong to) the 'radical opposition' (line 9), thereby making her protest appear moderate ('of moderately-active kind', line 20). Furthermore, she restricts the extent of her opposition — 'all my opposition is just'

(line 10) — to a concrete set of desires. Such desires are depicted as normal through the interactional resource of a three-part list in lines 10-14, which includes: 1) ‘in that I think that I can like (.) influence [...] the life of my country and my city’; 2) ‘in that I want to make a choice myself and not to have it made for me’; 3) ‘in that (.) I want something that the government doesn’t allow’. The first item emphasises the state of belonging (*my* country and *my* city): the implication here is that citizens should be able to participate in the life of the country. The second item similarly attends to citizenry rights of free choice. The final item assigns the blame to the government for not letting P42 realise her ordinary citizenry desires. As such, the list explains the inevitability of the opposition, given that the government does not fulfil its obligations (‘that’s why I don’t agree’, line 16). But what the list also seems to achieve is recasting P42’s disagreement from being a criterial attribute of ‘opposition’ category to being an attribute of ‘ordinary citizen’ category. Display of surprise in line 17 (‘already this makes me the opposition which is rather strange’) contributes to producing this effect, by questioning the link between the category of opposition and the attribute of disagreement. Finally, disagreement is described as ‘normal like human (.) wants’ (line 19), reinforcing the idea that P42’s oppositional commitment is in no way special.

Taken as a whole, then, P42’s account has the effect of suggesting that her oppositional belonging is temporary since it is contingent upon the situation in the country. In a way, opposition itself seems to be made into a predicate of being a citizen of a country whose government is utterly unaccountable (line 16). ,

To summarise, this section has explored another strategy of establishing affiliation with the opposition category. The analysis demonstrates that assuming oppositional identity is not an unproblematic action for the interviewees, and the above strategy is a resource for dealing with it, by delimiting their membership, specifying grounds for it and playing down oppositional commitment.

Over the next two sections, I investigate further ways in which participants manage problems raised by the questions of oppositional belonging, this time by rejecting or denying membership.

3. 'We don't have the real power to be the opposition': rejecting oppositional affiliation through not possessing 'right' attributes

In my analysis, I have identified a number of ways through which protesters display the inappropriateness of oppositional identity. In this section, I summarise one such strategy, which consists in invoking and denying the possession of category-bound activities and motives. In the following extract, the speaker demonstrates resistance to opposition through denying active protest involvement.

Extract 5.7: Protester 40, female, Moscow

- 1 YL would you call yourself a part of the opposition?
2 P40 um (0.4) I guess for me it's di- (1) it's difficult
3 YL mmhm
4 P40 because I can- can't call myself a part of the opposition directly (.)
5 because basically I (.) have been at a demonstration only twice
6 one is when there was (.) they circled they surrounded us in the white ring
7 YL mmhm mmhm
8 P40 and the second (.) first time when I went out back then in spring
9 I mean I don't (.) participate like, I didn't go to elections as an observer
10 YL mmhm
11 P40 I don't participate actively so to speak and I don't go to the majority of the events
12 connected to it (.) but nonetheless if we're talking about- if (0.2) we are
13 to distinguish between (.) the opposition and those who are for the government
14 YL mmhm
15 P40 then of course I count myself as the opposition

In the beginning of the extract, the interviewer probes for the interviewee's self-identification as opposition, asking whether she would call herself so. P40's response sets up an indirect rejection: first, she assesses such definition as 'difficult' (line 2), hence signalling to the interviewer that the answer would probably be a 'no'. Second, she accounts for such assessment, saying 'I can- can't call myself a part of the opposition directly' (line 4), which formulates explicit denial of opposition self-identification. The

term ‘can’t’ implies impossibility for something to be done and suggests that P40 is not fully accountable for the rejection. To say that someone ‘cannot’ do something is different from saying they ‘would not’ or ‘don’t want’ to; the former presupposes that the rejection is not due to the desire of a speaker as such. Modal verbs like ‘cannot’ are often used that way, to downplay the agency of a speaker through implying that some external factors normatively forbid them from saying or doing something (Sneijder & te Molder, 2005). In case of P40, the design of her claim thus warrants the rejection as a logical thing (cf. Edwards, 1997). Note, however, that the denial is attenuated: in saying that she is not ‘directly’ the opposition, the interviewee implies that she might be described as opposition in some other way. Indeed, further in the account she does categorise herself as opposition, but under certain conditions.

In terms of affiliation rejection, P40’s explanatory account manufactures and rejects the opposition as a category with normatively-bound activities. Specifically, P40’s first argument for not being the opposition is ‘I (.) have been at a demonstration only twice’ (line 5). ‘Only twice’ implies that P40’s protest experience is not enough to qualify as the opposition. Furthermore, she describes other instances of *not* participating: ‘I didn’t go to elections as an observer’ (line 9), ‘I don’t go to the majority of the events’ (line 11), ‘I don’t participate actively’ (line 11). Such descriptions are category-resonant (Stokoe, 2012), in that they make available an inference that certain activities — such as going to the majority of demonstrations and being an election observer — are linked to the category of opposition. In denying doing these activities on her part, P40 shows that she does not possess the ‘right’ attributes, thereby warranting her rejection as category-based.

An additional observation here concerns the type of category-bound actions P40 rejects. ‘Going to a protest’ is an action which is observable and easy to measure (‘[I] have been at a demonstration only twice’, line 5). Such factual nature makes P40’s claims more likely to pass unchallenged by the interviewer. P40 additionally reinforces the facticity of her minimal protest involvement by locating specific details for both of her protests: the time of her first (or second, which is unclear as the interviewee says ‘and the second (.) first time’, line 8) protest, happening ‘back then in spring’ (line 8), and a memorable aspect of another where she was ‘surrounded’ (line 6).

Therefore, through the features of her description, P40 implies inadequacy for claiming oppositional belonging, based on the ‘fact’ that she is not active enough to qualify as a member of the opposition.

Another important observation is that P40 also affirms her membership through formulating alternative understanding of the opposition. She does this by providing a conditional account in lines 12-15: ‘if(0.2) we are to distinguish between (.) the opposition and those who are for the government [...] then of course I count myself as the opposition’. With this, the interviewee attends to a different category-bound aspect of the opposition, adversarial attitude. ‘Of course’ gives the impression that counting herself as opposition is obvious under such circumstances thus strengthening her claim. In this way, P40 manages her identity as opposition in a limited sense, which accommodates her initial rejection of ‘direct’ oppositional membership.

A similar strategy is employed in the next two extracts. Extract 8 comes from an interview with a protester who, on several occasions prior to the question in line 1, has suggested that he would not like to be seen as a representative of the opposition: the question is thus asked in negative form. The speaker in extract 9 answers the question ‘what’s opposition for you?’, the extract follows his saying that the word opposition has several meanings.

Extract 5.8: Protester 23, male, Saint Petersburg

- 1 YL you wouldn’t call yourself a part of the opposition?
- 2 (0.5)
- 3 P23 I wouldn’t call myself so [yeah
- 4 YL [aha
- 5 P23 well I think that (.) to call oneself a part of the opposition
- 6 means um (.) to actively take some actions (.)
- 7 YL for example?
- 8 P23 well for one thing (.) to go out to the streets (.) [protesting
- 9 YL [aha aha
- 10 P23 it’s (.) the simplest

11 YL mmhm
 12 P23 or maybe (.) even perhaps more precisely is just to be a member of some organisation
 13 YL mmhm
 14 P23 public (.) underground (.) parliamentary or not
 15 YL mmhm
 16 P23 that's it (.) I'm not a member of these

Extract 5.9: Protester 30, male, Volgograd

1 P30 am I the opposition?
 2 YL mmhm
 3 P30 for example I mean (.) rather I'm a civic activist yeah
 4 because the opposition in a narrow sense of the word
 5 YL mmhm
 6 P30 after all it's something political (.) political movement party group that fights for power
 7 YL mmhm aha
 8 P30 I'm not a member of any like party group that fights for power
 9 YL aha aha
 10 P30 so um (0.5) in that sense £ what sort of opposition am I? £ I- (.)
 11 YL aha
 12 P30 I'm prepared to support the opposition (.) to support like vote for them or something
 13 YL mmhm
 14 P30 but myself- (.) and on the other hand in a broad sense how it's understood in the media
 15 (.) written about, then yes (.) I am the opposition because I'm against the current regime

In these extracts, the speakers reject oppositional affiliation. P23 explicitly confirms ('yeah') the supposition made by the interviewer, that he 'wouldn't call [him]self' a part of the opposition (8:3). P30 achieves the same effect by implying that he has membership in a different category when in line 3 he says 'rather I'm a civic activist'. Establishing alternative group belonging in itself reinforces the claim to non-membership; furthermore, 'rather' presupposes a contrast, and it is inferred that being a 'civic activist' rejects being 'the opposition'. Notably, another rejection is produced in an indirect way too, through a questioning upshot accompanied by a smiley voice, 'so um (0.5) in that sense £ what sort of opposition am I? £' (line 10). The question is treated as rhetorical and

as a rejection of oppositional membership: it is followed by the interviewer's 'aha' in line 11, a display of 'catching' the implied suggestion that P30 is not the opposition.

Next, speakers provide accounts for rejecting the oppositional belonging. This is done, first, by describing explicitly what it means to call oneself a part of the opposition. P23 claims that 'to call oneself a part of the opposition means um (.) to actively take some actions' (8:5-6) and gives two examples at the request of the interviewer. These are: 'to go out to the streets (.) [protesting' (line 8), and 'to be a member of some organisation' (line 12). The speaker thus indicates that being active and belonging to an organisation are seen as expected from someone who identifies as opposition, manufacturing these features as category-bound. Protesting is characterised as 'the simplest' (line 10) and organisational belonging as 'even perhaps more precisely' (line 12). It is thus implied that there is some variability or flexibility in the activities associated with category membership. Similarly, in extract 9, P30 says 'the opposition [...] it's something political (.) political movement party group that fights for power' (lines 1, 6), thereby constructing the opposition as an institutionalised collective of people motivated by the desire to seize power. He also implies that there is an alternative, broader meaning, by producing a definition of opposition 'in a narrow sense of the word' (line 4). So, speakers claim that engaging in activities related to protest and affiliation with a relevant organisation are criterial for labelling oneself as the opposition. Moreover, these are produced as definitional, and hence 'objective' or factual descriptions, of what is necessary for calling oneself a member.

These descriptions are followed by an explicit claim that speakers do not possess the features they previously defined as criterial. Specifically, P23 and P30 deny being members of oppositional organisations ('I'm not a member of these', 8:16; 'I'm not a member of any like party group that fights for power', 9:8). In so doing, interviewees contest the appropriateness of oppositional self-categorisation, on the grounds of not protesting or doing things previously defined as central for being a part of the opposition. Note how the claim in extract 8 is strengthened through the upshot's design: first through the use of 'that's it' which additionally establishes the reason as sufficient. Second, sequentially the upshot comes after the utterance that encompasses the variety of potential

affiliations, ‘public (.) underground (.) parliamentary or not’ (line 14), and as such implies that, since P23 is not a member of *any* organisation, he cannot *in any way* be linked to the opposition.

It is also worth noting how the interviewee in extract 9 subsequently modifies his rejection account to produce circumstances in which he might be seen as being part of the opposition. Similarly to the speaker in extract 7, P30 asserts his oppositional identity on the grounds of taking an anti-government stance. He first displays his support for (rather than membership of) the opposition, by emphasising that he is ‘prepared to support the opposition’, and producing a list ‘to support like to vote for them or something’ (line 12). He then constructs the grounds on which he can claim membership, ‘in a broad sense [...] I am the opposition because I’m against the current regime’ (lines 14-15). Arguably, the claims of partial membership address the potential challenge for the interviewees regarding the basis for volunteering to participate in the interview, which I will discuss at the end of this chapter.

Overall, then, the design of the extracts above closely resembles the one we observed in the first section, where definitions of the opposition were formulated in order to confirm one’s membership. Here a different use of this strategy can be seen, with definitions being used for justifying the rejection of oppositional belonging, drawing upon non-possession of category-bound features. At the same time, speakers in extracts 7 and 9 assert partial opposition-related membership, exemplified through their anti-government stances. The important point here is that such memberships are themselves presented as conditional, valid only in certain contexts.

In the extract below, a variation of the same strategy of rejecting oppositional membership can be observed. The interviewee there warrants his rejection of the membership category through different means: not by rejecting involvement in activities that could be characterised as ‘oppositional’, but by denying that these activities were motivated by ‘oppositional’ concerns. The question in line 1 is asked after the speaker has categorically refuted being the opposition but pointed to a number of protests he had participated in; ‘on that grounds’ is a reference to such active involvement.

Extract 5.10: Protester 35, male, Volgograd

- 1 YL and still you wouldn't call yourself opposition on that grounds?
2 P35 well we can't (.) to start with (.) we don't have real power to be the opposition yeah↑
3 YL mmhm mmhm
4 P35 so (.) and second, after all our goal our aim is ecology
5 YL mm
6 P35 I mean we (.) don't fight for some rights of like, everyone on earth
7 YL mmhm [so it's something-
8 P35 [like all the humiliated and insulted yeah
9 but we have a clear objective (.) we deal with ecology
10 and in particular (.) with ecology of the Volga-Akhtuba region
11 YL mmhm mmhm
12 P35 that's it

In this extract, P35 is asked a question that is designed in such a way as to suggest that P35's earlier rejection of opposition affiliation is unwarranted in some way. First, the question in line 1 features an orientation to 'that grounds', which within the conversational context refers to the preceding evidence of P35's protest involvement. Second, 'still you wouldn't call yourself' can be heard as displaying surprise or even disbelief over the fact that P35 *still* resists being called the opposition even though he took part in protests. What the interviewer's question does, then, is implicitly to establish a certain activity as category-bound (opposition-going to protests), and to challenge P35's rejection of oppositional membership as adequate.

In response to this challenge, P35 does two things. First, he formulates an explicit denial, saying 'we can't' (line 2), with plural pronoun most probably referring to his ecological protest group. The form of denial is identical to that of P40 from the extract 7 above, and implies that some objective factors normatively prevent P35 and his group from calling themselves the opposition. Next, P35 lists two reasons for not calling himself 'opposition'. The first reason concerns not having 'real power to be the opposition' (line 2). Here, the listener can infer that 'power' is the 'right' attribute of oppositional belonging, and because P35 does not have it he is legitimately not one of them. The second reason

has to do with having ‘ecology’ as ‘our goal our aim’ (line 4). ‘After all’ implies that this is the ultimate and most powerful argument for not being the opposition.

This argument is expanded following the lack of uptake by the interviewer in line 5, by producing a description of what P35 and his group do *not* do: ‘we (.) don’t fight for some rights’ (line 6). This claim is strengthened by using extreme case formulations to describe whose rights they do not fight for (‘everyone on earth [...] all the humiliated and insulted’, lines 6, 8). These terms simultaneously portray such goals as unrealistic and members of the opposition, people who *do have* such unreasonable objectives, as misguided. ‘We’, by contrast, are described as having a ‘clear objective’ (line 9) and a specific (‘that’s it’) and realistic goal (‘ecology of the Volga-Akhtuba region’, line 10). In so doing, the interviewee displays the non-possession of the motives that are likely to be seen as criterial for the opposition, in particular the tireless struggle for the ‘rights’ of people in need (cf. Bobel, 2007). P35 thus counters the suggestion of the interviewer, that his protest involvement alone can be enough to categorise him as the opposition. So, in this especially accountable context, where it is implied that his actions can form adequate grounds for his belonging, P35 justifies his claims by mobilising and rejecting category-bound motives and undermining opposition category membership at the same time.

In the last two extracts of this section, speakers similarly warrant not calling themselves members of the opposition by claiming incompatible motives. Extract 11 is the second part of the interviewee’s answer to the question about how the respondent’s attitudes to politics have changed, and is thus an example of a more spontaneous ‘opposition belonging’ talk. The speaker in extract 12 replies to the question ‘what is your relation to the opposition?’; the extract picks up after some unrelated chatter about noises outside the room. Note that Alexei Navalny is the *de facto* leader of the opposition and Boris Nemtsov is one of the oppositional leaders who was still alive at the time of the interview.

Extract 5.11: Protester 4, male, Moscow

12 P4 I don’t want to call myself opposition I guess I’m an active citizen

13 YL aha

14 P4 I mean I have- I went- (0.5) going back to that question about the protest (.)

15 I didn't protest because of my political position not because I'm pro some Navalny or

16 (0.5) Nemtsov god forbid yeah hhhh I think that many people, those who judge

17 and criticise us from the outside they make a mistake when they say *oh here go*

18 *the followers of Navalny, look at them traitors, look, who they support*

19 but people who go out are in fact all different, and they don't come for Navalny

20 they are not the followers of Navalny, they are not the opposition

21 YL mmhm

22 P4 they are the society, active part of the society who um (.) at the very least,

23 want to draw attention (.) to certain problems and at best they want to change um

24 the state of affairs

Extract 5.12: Protester 5, female, Moscow

1 P5 I can't call myself (.) the opposition (.)

2 YL mmhm

3 P5 as such (.) maybe I am the opposition but in a broader sense

4 YL aha

5 P5 but with those people I can't um relate to them in any way

((some lines omitted – we discuss loud noise outside the room))

6 so (0.2) I still can't find someone who (.) um well whom to follow

7 YL mmhm

8 P5 it seems to be Navalny for now but um

9 YL mmhm

10 P5 when I went to Manegnaya Square I didn't go there for Navalny

11 YL mmhm

12 P5 although (.) well sure five years (.) of colony is too much but I went in particular

13 (.) against the system that basically can put anyone on trial for something

14 YL mmhm

15 P5 and after the Manegnaya um two criminal cases were set up

16 one of them was for stickers that young people stuck to windows

17 YL mmhm

18 P5 since I also had the sticker (.) and I stuck it to my bag but theoretically

19 I could have easily stuck it to the Duma's window if I was standing nearby

20 YL mm
 21 P5 and then theoretically um (.) the detectives could find like (.) some video
 22 of me sticking it and I would be put to prison for five years
 23 YL mmhm just like the others yeah
 24 P5 and (.) there wouldn't be a way to explain it so I went to protest against that

The beginnings of the extracts feature explicit denials of category self-ascription. In extract 11, the speaker says 'I don't want to call myself opposition' (line 12) and in extract 12, the respondent claims that she 'can't call myself (.) the opposition' (line 1). Speakers also make relevant their involvement in protest. P4 says 'I went' (11:14) and orients to the previous question about the motive for his active protest involvement. P5 makes it clear that she 'went to Manegnaya Square' (12:10). The speakers then deny certain grounds for protesting by using formulations 'I didn't protest because' (11:15) and 'I didn't go there for' (12:10). More specifically, in extract 11 the interviewee denies being motivated by political beliefs, such as his 'political position' or support for oppositional leaders (lines 15-16). Similarly, P5 in extract 12 rejects the idea that she joined the protest because of her support for Navalny ('I didn't go there for Navalny', line 10). These formulations mobilise the said motives as category-bound, conventionally attributed to people who consider themselves to be a part of the opposition. Through explicitly rejecting them, the interviewees undermine their category membership.

Through sequential positioning, respondents contrast these 'oppositional' motives with other reasons for going to protest. In extract 11, this is the desire 'to draw attention (.) to certain problems and at best [...] to change um the state of affairs' (lines 23-24). In extract 12, the interviewee claims that she wanted to show her opposition to a system 'that basically can put anyone on trial for something' (line 13).

Note that interviewees enhance the credibility of their accounts in two ways. First, this is done by highlighting the unlikelihood of the suggestion that they were motivated by 'oppositional' concerns. In extract 11, the speaker portrays the idea that he is motivated by his political beliefs as laughable and unthinkable. This is done by using ironic 'god forbid' (*ne dai bog*) in line 16, an expression often used to suggest that someone would never do something; and by accompanying his turn with a spate of laughter. In extract 12,

the interviewee points out that she is still undecided as to whom to support ('I still can't find someone who (...) um well whom to follow', line 6). By evidencing her uncertainty, P5 implies that she does not have enough commitment to support Navalny even though she understands that his sentence is unfair ('sure five years (...) of colony is too much', line 12), thereby sustaining motive denial.

Second, the speakers strengthen the plausibility of alternative, 'non-oppositional' motives they claim to have. In extract 11, P4 defends his motive against other people's expectations to the contrary. To make his claim convincing, he undermines the opinions of those who see protesters in a solely 'political' terms, by presenting them as outsiders who are not aware of the true state of affairs. In particular, in line 17 he describes such people as mistaken ('they make a mistake') and portrays them as outsiders who lack the true knowledge of protesters' objectives ('criticise us from the outside'). Furthermore, P4 uses reported speech to depict such people in a negative light. As noted by Stokoe and Edwards (2007), reporting words of others invites inferences about these others, based on the way direct speech is presented. The reported account here works to characterise the people as inclined to mock ('*oh here go [...] look at them [...] look*') and insult the protesters, calling them 'traitors' (lines 17-18). It is also inferred that they lack sensitivity, as they seem to 'lump' all protesters together as the 'followers of Navalny', while P4 stresses that 'people who go out are in fact all different' (line 19). 'In fact' displays such motivation as the real one, contrasted with the wrongness of the people who think otherwise. Invocation of difference presents a further warrant for disregarding oppositional affiliation, by claiming that there can be no uniform motive. Lastly, in the final upshot the opposition and 'oppositional' motives are rejected through a three-part list: 'they don't come for Navalny they are not the followers of Navalny, they are not the opposition' (lines 19-20). Alternative categorisation of protesters as 'the society, active part of the society' (line 22), similarly to 'citizen' identity claimed in line 12, enables the interviewee to highlight the civic side of the protest and implicitly contrast it with, and distance it from, the political 'opposition'.

The speaker in extract 10 makes her alternative motive more convincing with a story that points to the flaws of the system, by highlighting the asymmetry between the

actions and the penalty ('two criminal cases were set up [...] for stickers', lines 15-16). By addressing the possibility of P5 herself being put in prison (lines 18-22), the story implies that anyone is theoretically under threat of being unfairly prosecuted, thereby reinforcing the rationality of protesting against it. The speaker finishes her account with an emphatic 'so I went to protest against that' a claim (line 24), which establishes the boundaries of her specific motive and implicitly contrasts it with other potential motives.

Both speakers, then, can be seen as carefully attending to the justification of the denials of oppositional membership. Two-part formulations, where their subjective motives are contrasted with 'oppositional' motives, rhetorically strengthen rejections of categorical self-ascription.

In summary, the analysis in this section has shown how oppositional affiliation can be denied by contrasting different attributes and motives for protesting, and claiming that speakers lack the 'right' ones to legitimately belong to the opposition. In addition, the speakers in this section further evidence the delicate character of the topic of opposition, through producing indirect rejections (extracts 7 and 9) and reducing their agency by formulating normative denials ('I can't', extracts 7 and 10). Delicacy thus seems to be a feature that is shared both by the speakers who reject opposition belonging and by the speakers who affirm it.

4. 'I don't like to use this word': rejecting affiliation by establishing 'opposition' as a wrong word

The next strategy of denying oppositional membership is through describing the term 'opposition' itself as inappropriate in some way. Consider the following extract, where the interviewee is asked what opposition means for him.

Extract 5.13: Protester 39, male, Saint Petersburg

- 1 YL what's opposition for you?
2 (1.8)

3 P39 well I don't know (0.2) I mean there are like many (0.5) let's say dimensions sides
4 YL mmhm
5 P39 and meanings to this word (.) if=
6 YL =well for you personally (.) if you were asked to explain what do you mean by opposition
7 (0.3)
8 P39 basically I don't like to use this word
9 YL mmhm
10 P39 because in a way it has um (.) specific connotations
11 YL mmhm
12 P39 that is, opposition is usually used to designate either parliamentary opposition
13 YL aha
14 P39 or no- non-parliamentary opposition I mean (.) um both of them are already well (0.2)
15 so to speak (0.2) um discredited (.) by the current political situation
16 YL do you mean in Russia?=
17 P39 =yeah=
18 YL =here in particular? aha
19 P39 well and in other countries too, in many I don't know um (0.5) take Germany for example
20 there Die Linke is the opposition but I wouldn't want to join Die Linke in Germany
21 YL mmhm
22 P39 I mean it's not just Russian situation (.) so I (.) I just don't use this word because I don't-
23 I don't want to associate myself with like (.) with some Navalny (.)
24 with Solidarity or (.) I mean the Russian Solidarity political movement
25 YL aha
26 P39 or with I don't know, something else (.) so I can say that I'm like (.) in opposition in
27 the sense of being in opposition to something
28 YL aha
29 P39 Put- to Putin I'm obviously in opposition
30 YL mmhm mmhm

The interviewer's question in line 1, 'what's opposition for you?', invites some kind of definition ('what is opposition') and implies that this may be personal or unique to the speaker ('for you'). Given that P39 was recruited because of his supposed involvement in oppositional activities, it is natural to assume that 'opposition' does mean something to him. The interviewee's response, however, implies that the question is somehow problematic.

For example, there is a noticeable delay before the answer is produced (line 2), after which the speaker displays a lack of understanding ('well I don't know', line 3). P39 accounts for the difficulty in describing the meaning of opposition by characterising it as having diverse meanings. This is done through a three-part list: 'there are like many (0.5) let's say dimensions sides [...] and meanings to this word' (lines 3-5). The three components ('dimensions sides [...] meanings') indicate that trying to offer a definition of the opposition is difficult, as no univocal meaning can be specified. The interviewer treats these displays of difficulty by reformulating the question to 'well for you personally (.) if you were asked to explain what do you mean by opposition' (line 6).

In response, the interviewee works up the rejection account by mobilising the issue of negative connotations with a direct assessment: 'I don't like to use this word' because 'it has um (.) specific connotations' (lines 8, 10). The claim of specific connotations has two parts to it. At first, P39 makes a reference to a conventional understanding of the opposition ('opposition is usually used to designate', line 12) as a group of people who constitute 'parliamentary opposition [...] or no- non-parliamentary opposition' (lines 12, 14). These two categories can potentially encompass any oppositional group, suggesting that the account is applicable to any opposition. Then, the interviewee problematises the status of such generic opposition, claiming that 'both of them are [...] discredited (.) by the current political situation' (lines 14-15). This enables P39 to discount the term 'opposition' on the grounds that it is used to designate something that is dysfunctional.

The rejection is reinforced through the evidence of the deficiency of opposition in various national contexts. For example, when he is asked whether the opposition is discredited in Russia 'in particular' (line 18), P39 refers to the Left Party in Germany which he 'wouldn't want to join' (line 20). In the upshot in line 22, he states that 'it's not just Russian situation'. This claim functions to present the issue with opposition as general and pervasive, and further underscores the futility of the term.

Subsequently, by drawing on the understanding of the opposition as a word with negative connotations, P39 explicitly rejects his membership in the category of opposition. This is done in the form of subjective mental state avowal (Edwards & Potter, 2005), not wanting, by producing a three-part list of the things P39 does not want: 1) 'I don't want

to associate myself with like (.) with some Navalny’, line 23; 2) ‘with Solidarity or (.) I mean the Russian Solidarity political movement’, line 24; 3) ‘or with I don’t know, something else’, line 26. Listing here enables P39 to position himself outside of the political groups that can be seen as the opposition. Navalny is the leader of the Russian non-systemic opposition, and the Russian Solidarity is a democratic movement founded by the members of the liberal non-parliamentary opposition: both are clearly linked to the opposition as a political force. The third item, generalised list completer (Jefferson, 1990), establishes a more general association and finishes the list. As such, the appropriateness of oppositional identity is resisted on the basis of P39’s desire to distance himself from negative ‘political’ connotations that affiliation with the opposition entail.

Note also that similarly to some of the speakers above, P39 then offers an alternative understanding of himself as being ‘in opposition’ in the second upshot in line 26. His account features the term opposition but respecifies it, from a group category (being *the* opposition) to an attitude (‘being *in* opposition to something’, line 27, emphasis added). ‘Something’ is then specified as opposition to the then-Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin (line 29). By saying that his stance against Putin is ‘obviously’ the case, the interviewee depicts this attitude as common knowledge and a taken-for-granted fact that does not require further explanation.

Finally, there are further instances of occasioning the topic of opposition as delicate throughout the extract. For example, in line 10, the interviewee produces a tentative account for his dislike, saying that he does not like the word because ‘in a way it has um (.) specific connotations’. Furthermore, lines 14-15 feature a lot of hesitation, with pauses and hmms: ‘opposition I mean (.) um both of them are already well (0.2) so to speak (0.2) um discredited (.)’. Finally, the account is attenuated with ‘I don’t know’, in lines 3, 19 and 26. Such multiple hesitations and ‘delicacy’ instances help to manufacture the topic of opposition as a sensitive matter (Lerner, 2013).

So overall, the interviewee denies his oppositional belonging by characterising ‘opposition’ as a word and rejecting its relevance to him on grounds related to its status as a word with problematic (political) connotations. A similar strategy can be seen in the last two extracts of this chapter, extracts 14 and 15 below, although there the

characterisations are not produced in direct response to a question. In extract 14, the speaker spontaneously starts talking about the opposition as a word in response to the question about his attitudes to politics (it is the first part of the extract 11 above). In extract 15, it is the interviewer who prioritises the understanding of ‘opposition’ as a word.

Extract 5.14: Protester 4, male, Moscow

- 1 P4 I don’t like the word opposition because (0.5)
- 2 YL sure I’d like to hear about that mmhm
- 3 P4 um well
- 4 (1)
- 5 what does it mean opposition (.) it means like being always against something
- 6 YL mmhm
- 7 P4 well no (.) I think that what we have is not the opposition but (.) broader I mean not the
- 8 opposition as some specific political force that is (.) in opposition to the current regime
- 9 YL mmhm
- 10 P4 when they (.) become the regime they stop being opposition, I mean they of course want
- 11 to become the regime yeah but the people who st- (.) I mean (.)
- 12 I don’t want to call myself opposition I guess I’m an active citizen
- 13 YL aha

Extract 5.15: Protester 34, female, Volgograd

- 1 YL personally (.) do you call your- (.) like, use the word (0.2) oppo[sition to-
- 2 P34 [but I- (.) I don’t use it
- 3 YL mmhm mmhm (.) and why?
- 4 (1.5)
- 5 P34 um::
- 6 YL I mean for those movements like Bolotnaya Square, people at Bolotnaya Square here too-
- 7 P34 well (.) it’s like I don’t want to put my head on the block either
- 8 YL aha aha
- 9 P34 hh why would I need (0.5) why would I voluntarily stick myself to (.) um
- 10 bad definitions so to speak (.) [to the definition of politics
- 11 YL [you mean like- aha

In extract 14, the interviewee spontaneously describes 'opposition' as a word and provides a negative assessment of it ('I don't like the word', line 1). In extract 15, it is the interviewer who repairs the initial formulation of the question, 'do you call your-', to 'use the word opposition to-' (line 1). It is interesting to note here that the initial question, which is hearable as 'do you call yourself opposition', is amended to treat 'opposition' as a word that may be used to describe oneself. The interviewee rejects the term ('but I- (.) I don't use it', line 2) before the interviewer has finished the question. Therefore in this extract, the literal understanding of the opposition is a joint production.

Here, as in extract 13 above, participants subsequently produce an account of why the word is inappropriate or problematic. In extract 14, the speaker undermines the opposition with reference to its literal meaning, as 'being always against something' (line 5). By using the extreme case adverb 'always', P4 emphasises the rigidity of the term's negative connotations. Furthermore, 'what we have' (line 7) is claimed not to be the opposition and this is warranted through contrasting it with what opposition is conventionally. That is, P39 implies that the opposition (should) mean 'some specific political force' (line 8), motivated by a desire to become the regime themselves ('they of course want to become the regime', lines 10-11). However, the respondent claims that 'what we have' is 'broader' (line 7), which in turn means that the word 'opposition' is the wrong one, based on its conventional understandings.

In extract 15, the interviewer solicits an explanation of why the interviewee does not use the term (line 3). Note that this question produces no immediate answer; rather, there is a long silence in line 4 and some prolonged humming in line 5, both of which can be taken as displays of the topic being delicate. The interviewer also seems to treat it as problematic, using an 'I mean'-prefaced utterance in an attempt to encourage a response from the interviewee (Maynard, 2013). When the response is finally formulated, P34 rejects the word 'opposition' on the grounds of it being an example of 'bad definitions' (line 10). More specifically, P34 uses the idiomatic expression 'I don't want to put my head on the block either' (line 15). The idiom suggests that identifying with the opposition

can put the reputation of a person at risk. Furthermore, the negative connotations of the term ‘opposition’ are highlighted in rhetorical question in line 9 (‘why would I need (0.5) why would I voluntarily stick myself’), which implies that there is no good reason to affiliate with something that has harmful, specifically political (‘to the definition of politics’, line 10), associations.

Therefore, in these extracts the speakers undermine the appropriateness of ‘opposition’ on the grounds of it not being an accurate label, due to its negative (or even incorrect) connotations and association with discredited political groups.

A final point is that, having dismissed the term opposition, speakers offer alternative self-descriptions. In extract 14, the speaker says ‘I don’t want to call myself opposition I guess I’m an active citizen’ (line 12), and in extract 15 the speaker says ‘we’re civic activists’ (line 12). Several points are worth making here. First, these claims treat opposition as a category label rather than simply a word. Second, the labels mobilise identity as ‘citizens’ and thereby suggest that interviewees’ activities are related to this category membership. Third, speakers imply that this category is distinct from involvement with (formal) politics. The last point is stated explicitly in extract 15, when P34 says ‘we’re outside of politics’ (line 12). Here it is important to recall that there was an orientation towards similar ‘civic’ identities in the previously discussed extracts, where interviewees identified themselves as ‘civic activist’ (9:3) and ‘active citizen’ (11:12). Such self-categorisations underline the social, rather than political, nature of the interviewees’ involvement; I consider why this might be important, in the discussion.

To summarise, extracts 13-15 demonstrate a number of devices for rejecting the opposition as a word, such as by orienting to this word’s multiple meanings and treating it as having negative political connotations. In the following discussion I will show how this strategy, along with the other three strategies identified above, can be understood as a resource for addressing certain interactional and interpersonal concerns.

Discussion

In this chapter, I have focused on protesters' responses to the questions that invited them to describe their understanding of opposition and to characterise themselves in relation to it. My primary objective was to show that membership and non-membership in oppositional categories is accomplished through talk, rather than a stable and automatically assumed property of a person. Through my analysis, I demonstrated that a certain shared identity does not necessarily become relevant when people start protesting, as is sometimes implied in traditional experimental social psychological analyses of protest behaviour. Rather, oppositional belonging was shown to be a highly negotiable matter, with some protesters actively working up entitlements to it and others forcefully disregarding its relevance.

I identified a range of strategies that participants used to manage their oppositional affiliation. Two acceptance strategies were aimed at accomplishing oppositional membership, through acknowledging the possession of the features that were portrayed as criterial (strategy 1), and through delimiting oppositional membership by specifying the nature of one's oppositional involvement (strategy 2). Next, two rejection strategies were mobilised to deny the appropriateness of opposition identity, on the grounds of not possessing opposition-bound characteristics (strategy 3), and by pointing to problematic semantics and undermining the use of opposition as a word (strategy 4).

The analysis in this chapter has demonstrated that management of oppositional identity is contingent upon the social construction of categories and their inferences, showing that both the speakers who confirmed oppositional belonging and those who negated it displayed sensitivity to the inferences that invocation of categories entails. As I mentioned above, categories are conventionally associated with particular activities and other features (Sacks, 1992), which are likely to be expected from the people who claim membership in a category. The interviewees displayed awareness of such inferences and managed them through the design of their accounts.

Specifically, the label of opposition was depicted as particularly problematic due to its political and institutionalised inferences. This was especially evident in the rejection

strategies. The patterns of rejection lent support to the idea that resistance of categorical identity of opposition was designed to address issues that stem from the implied association between the opposition and politics. Speakers who employed the third strategy invoked and discredited politics-related motivation, namely support for oppositional leaders such as Navalny (extracts 11, 12). They also depicted opposition as essentially institutionalised identity, by aligning it with ‘official’ political parties and groups (extracts 8, 9) and associating it with ‘real power’ (extract 10). Furthermore, negative connotations of the word ‘opposition’ were designed to be heard as political connotations by the speakers in the fourth strategy (extracts 13, 14 and 15). Such formulations were designed to portray the opposition as in some way compromised by its close proximity to the realm of politics, thereby accounting for the rejection of oppositional affiliation. In addition, the alternative categories with which speakers claimed affiliation were characterised as civic (‘civic activist’, extracts 9, 15), rather than political.

Acceptance accounts, too, displayed active management of the opposition category and its inferences. For example, speakers using the first strategy affirmed their oppositional belonging through claiming possession of attributes which were positioned as criterial, in disagreement with the government (extracts 1, 2) and showing a desire for change (extract 3). In so doing, respondents manufactured the opposition as a community of people with shared opinions and not, say, as a specific political organisation or movement. Speakers whom we encountered in the second section similarly displayed their understanding of the opposition as a group based primarily on shared dissatisfaction (extract 6). Moreover, respondents worked to reduce their commitment to the category of opposition, in particular by downplaying the extent of their protesting behaviour (extracts 4, 5), which might suggest that speakers were concerned with positioning themselves as perhaps more ‘ordinary’ people rather than political activists (cf. Bobel, 2007).

These observations make it clear that the label of ‘opposition’ is certainly not neutral, and that it perhaps has certain political connotations that protesters strive to avoid. Indeed, this is in line with other research, which similarly found that more ‘ordinary’ protesters in Russia tended to distance themselves from ‘professional’ protesters and activists (for example, Zhelnina, 2013; Smyth et al., 2015). This brings us back to the

larger problem of potential negative inferences associated with being labelled ‘political’ in Russia, mentioned in the previous chapters. The analysis from this chapter adds credibility the idea that in the Russian context, there appears to be a rift between civil society and organised political entities, with belonging to the latter being displayed as far less desirable and to be avoided, even for people who wish to challenge the status quo (Daucé, 2012).

Another important observation to discuss is that, regardless of specific strategy, respondents across the extracts oriented to the topic of opposition as delicate, through pauses, hesitations, indirect acceptances/rejections and so on. These features raise an interesting consideration with regard to oppositional identity. Namely, it seems that rejecting, *as well as* accepting, oppositional affiliations is a highly accountable matter.

First, observations suggest that rejection of opposition entailed a certain interactional problem for speakers, and claiming alternative category membership or rejecting the meaningfulness of the descriptive term were ways to address it. Recall here that participants have been selected to take part in the study because of their active involvement in ‘oppositional’ or protest activities. This, then, provided grounds for making the assumption that they were indeed members of a related category (protesters, or members of the opposition). It would therefore become an accountable matter if they did not acknowledge or enforce such category membership, especially given that they reported activities conventionally related to that category. In other words, since oppositional affiliation was rejected, the interviewees might be left with an interactional problem: if they are not associated with the opposition, then why do they protest? The speakers appeared to be sensitive to this possibility, as rejections were not presented in straightforward ways but treated as delicate business. In addition, claims of alternative memberships can also be seen as related to this interactional issue. Claiming membership in alternative categories, such as being *in* opposition (extract 13), being an ‘active citizen’ (extracts 11, 14) and ‘civic activist’ (extracts 9, 15) and formulating specific circumstances when one can be seen as part of the opposition (extracts 7, 9, 12) seem to take care of the potential ‘who are you then?’ identity issue, because of the potential to explain protest behaviour without being seen as the ‘opposition’.

Second, the data indicated that assertions of oppositional belonging were similarly organised in ‘delicate’ ways, on the basis of an already-produced definition (extracts 1, 2), through identifying with a ‘concept’ rather than a ‘group’ (extract 3) and by simultaneously downplaying the degree of oppositional commitment (extracts 4, 5, 6). It can be argued that claiming oppositional belonging in this way, through specifying the nature and extent of affiliation, reduced the risk of unwanted inferences that might follow the more unconditional acceptances. At this point, it is difficult to speculate which inferences in particular were resisted, since, in contrast to the rejection strategies, speakers here did not explicitly attend to these. Based on extract 6, where the interviewee contrasted her personal ‘moderate’ opposition with a ‘radical’ one, it can be hypothesised that accepting the membership of the opposition could entail the problem of appearing as too extreme in some way.

As such, then, analytic findings allude to a potential dilemma of identification. Respondents were recruited as people who took part in protests, and therefore can be expected to relate to the opposition in some sense, based on their contentious actions. Rejecting such an assumption is likely to present an issue. But, at the same time, ‘opposition’ might be too extreme or ‘political’ a category (see discussion above), and asserting it directly would present a problem too. There is hence a dilemma which is addressed and resolved in a number of ways, specifically, by accepting opposition based on a concrete (attitudinal) understanding, reducing the commitment to the category and claiming membership in alternative categories that justify protest involvement.

Finally, I would like to point briefly to a potential implication of my analysis for the social psychological theory of protest behaviour, in particular for the theory of opinion-based group memberships. This theory was put forward by Bliuc, McGarty and colleagues (Bliuc et al., 2007; McGarty et al., 2009; McGarty et al., 2014; Musgrove & McGarty, 2008), who have suggested that instead of understanding collective identity in terms of belonging to broader categories or institutions, it can be seen in terms of shared opinion. This alternative framework suggests that in generic collective movements, such as popular protests against authoritarian regimes, where there is no clearly defined collective or organisation to affiliate with, protest participants will tend to affiliate with

each other on the basis of shared attitudes; specifically, being pro- or against something. My analysis offers support to this suggestion, by demonstrating that negotiation of oppositional identity is closely related to portraying the opposition as a community of people with shared opinions. In my data, dissatisfaction with the government was constructed as the principle attribute of the category of opposition by the speakers who asserted it; moreover, similar attitudes have been portrayed as legitimate grounds for being seen as opposition even by the speakers who rejected belonging to the opposition in the first place. My findings are hence in line with the idea that in broader protest movements, shared attitudinal memberships (being against the current regime) might be more salient than strictly group memberships (being a part of ‘the opposition’).

To summarise, I have illustrated how accepting and rejecting opposition is informed by interactional issues of accountability and normative assumptions about labels and category memberships. The analysis contributes to the understanding of protest in Russia, by providing insight into how the oppositional culture is experienced and interpreted by protesters, and how its various meanings are constructed and used to negotiate oppositional belonging. This chapter shows that discursively, the category of ‘opposition’ is certainly not neutral; in particular, it appears to have negative (specifically political) connotations, which are resisted by participants. Therefore, the tendency in the media to gloss over protesters as belonging to ‘the opposition’ does neither them nor the protest justice. In addition, my analysis reinforces the arguments against seeing identity as a decontextualised and unproblematic expression of the speakers’ psychological reality and affirms the importance of recognising identity as participants’ project. In the next chapter, I continue to investigate protesters’ descriptions, but broaden the focus to some extent. That is, while the previous three chapters centred around the accounts in which protesters described themselves, the next chapter explores how protesters describe others, specifically, the others who are not involved in protest.

Chapter 6. ‘They’re just people’: explaining inaction in talk about others

In the previous chapters, I have focused on how protesters describe their political attitudes, explain their motives for joining active protest and negotiate oppositional identities. This chapter shifts the focus from talking about oneself to talking about others, specifically, those others who are not involved in protest.

Protesters do not exist in a social vacuum; most studies of protest stress the paramount importance of societal contexts, public discourses and culture for the advancement of dissenting movements (Johnston & Klandermans, 1995; Tilly & Tarrow, 2007). In social psychology, the concept of social embeddedness has been developed in an attempt to explain how people become protesters and sustain their protest participation through societal interactions. Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans (2013) argued that the decision to join a protest is produced within social networks (‘embedded’ in them), and is facilitated by various network components, such as who people can reach, what kind of social and personal relationships they develop with others in the network and whether they can establish shared systems of meaning. Interactions in networks allow individual grievances and personal identifications to become collective and thus strengthen the movement. As the networks grow, they become more and more engaged in struggles to win the sympathy of not yet affiliated parties from the public. This suggests that protesters are likely to address in certain ways the topic of non-protesters and their behaviour.

Specifically, social embeddedness theory assumes that in an attempt to win societal support, protesters will try to affiliate with the wider public by emphasising shared goals and actively disaffiliate from those they perceive as enemies; for instance, an authority (Klandermans, Van der Toorn & Van Stekelenburg, 2008). It is argued that in so, doing protesters are motivated by a cognitive need to construct collective identity, since ‘only by virtue of their membership in this more inclusive group or community are they entitled to societal support for their claims’ (Simon & Klandermans, 2001, p. 326). While these hypotheses seem to be supported by experimental and survey studies, there

remains the question of whether (and how) such attempts would be made, were the protesters free to tell their personal stories and provide extended rationales, rather than answer a structured questionnaire. It thus seems desirable to explore protesters' own orientations to others and their behaviour in talk.

Another reason for exploring this topic is that research on protest in Russia demonstrates great variability in protesters' descriptions of the public. For example, Clément et al. (2010) discussed how in interviews Russian protesters contrasted 'laymen' with 'activists' and displayed their respect for the latter, and disdain for the former; the authors suggested that such a contrast enabled the speakers to separate their 'activist' in-group from the out-group. However, Clément and colleagues also mentioned that many interviewed activists called themselves 'former laymen' and professed their understanding of those who were still passive. Specifically, activists explained such passivity as a consequence of being caught up in layman thinking and behaviour patterns. Similarly, Volkov (2012b) offered fragments from the interviews with activists who took part in various demonstrations in Moscow, which showed that protesters blamed those who were passive or openly supportive of Putin's administration, for their lack of protest involvement. However, Volkov's data also demonstrated some interesting examples of activists criticising people for their inaction yet at the same time indexing such behaviour as understandable, through making references to external factors such as living in the provinces and having little access to independent media. It thus appears that talking about others, and their inaction in particular, is not an unproblematic topic for protesters, which begs further exploration.

Indeed, there is an analytic rationale for investigating if and how interviewees address the topic of public inaction in my own data. In the previous empirical chapters of this thesis, we saw how protest was constructed as a normative expectation and a rational choice that even ordinary and previously apolitical people should make given the deteriorating state of affairs in Russia. However, if protest is paramount, why then does the public at large remain uninvolved? It is important to remember that my interviews were conducted in July-September 2013, when the protest wave had already started to decline considerably (Magun, 2014); furthermore, even at the peak of protest in 2011-

2012 the number of people involved remained low in comparison with overall population (Greene, 2014). So in a way, my participants can be expected to deal with a dilemma ('protest is important — but people do not protest') or at least to have a certain 'puzzle' of public inaction to address and explain. Preliminary analysis showed that interviewees indeed attend to such puzzles through explaining public inaction, both when probed by the interviewer and of their own accord. Specifically, I was struck by an interesting detail of such explanations: when talking about the uninvolved public, my interviewees, while not actively denying the inference that such lack of involvement is potentially problematic, designed their accounts in such a way that non-participation appeared expected and justified. Analytically, it was somewhat surprising: because protest involvement was constructed as rational and expected earlier, I expected that those who remained uninvolved would be criticised, or that their behaviour would be indexed as unreasonable, making blamings and complaints about those who were uninvolved justified. However, this chapter demonstrates the opposite tendency, through exploring patterns of accounting for others' inaction.

Method

Informed by the theory, my interview plan included questions on the relationships between protesters and others. Specifically, I asked such questions as 'Do you think that protesters are different from the rest of the Russians?', 'Why do you think not many people in Russia protest?' and 'Do you think it is important to tell other people, to involve them?' Most of the time, however, my respondents would address the topic of others *before* such questions were asked, either in the process of answering other questions or to initiate a different discussion on their own. As interviewer, I would typically follow such addresses by probing them further and asking for explanations. To identify specific extracts for this chapter, I first focused on such probe-answer sequences. I selected a number of fragments with similar explanatory patterns, translated and transcribed them in detail in accordance with CA conventions.

I also read through the interviews in order to single out the sections where the interviewees invoke others in some way and offer explanatory accounts for their behaviour without being probed. Extracts 4, 5, 10-14 in this chapter are examples of such spontaneous accounts; these were selected as representative examples of identified accounting strategies. I noticed that unsolicited accounts of public behaviour were often produced while doing trouble telling; while I could not include extended sequences and initial questions due to space limit, where applicable I provided summaries of the preceding 'issue' talk. Those extracts would begin where interviewees started orienting to reasons for the behaviour of other people. The resulting mix of interviewer-driven and spontaneous accounts shows that providing explanations for public behaviour is a part of the speakers' own conversational business, rather than the sole result of the interviewer's intervention.

After the collection was built, I separated the extracts into three groups, according to the explanatory logic of the accounts. The first group was comprised of extracts that explained inaction through identifying obstacles that prevent people from becoming engaged in protest. Extracts in the second group portrayed lack of protest as a typical Russian/Soviet trait. The third group contained extracts in which speakers managed the issue of inaction by orienting to other meaningful ways of involvement. The chapter proceeds by analysing these three groups of extracts in turn.

1. 'It's difficult life circumstances': accounting for inaction by attributing it to obstacles

In this section, I explore how protesters explain the inaction of other people through identifying situational obstacles on the way to protesting. In the following extract, the interviewee is invited to explain his description of people as 'inert', something that he talked about earlier in the conversation when he contrasted the minority of active protesters and the 'inert' mass of people who do not engage in protests.

Extract 6.1: Protester 23, male, Saint Petersburg

- 1 YL you say *inert* (.) so these are the people who don't (0.8) won't start anything on their own?
2 P23 yes I don't (.) mean this in some bad sense
3 YL aha aha
4 P23 they're just people who live and (0.2) well yeah they don't do anything (.)
5 they're (0.2) maybe they're sympathetic (.) to the opposition, maybe not
6 YL mmhm
7 P23 maybe they simply don't realise
8 YL mmhm
9 P23 um (.) that everything is bad
10 (0.5)
11 maybe they don't even go to vote
12 YL mmhm
13 P23 so it's like that

In this extract, the interviewer's probe makes available an inference that 'inert' people are deficient in some way, by characterising them as lacking action ('people who don't') and initiative ('won't start anything on their own') in line 1. The interviewee displays his awareness of such negative inference and wards it off by saying that he does not 'mean [inert] in some bad sense' (line 2). P23 also downgrades the significance of this label ('inert') through stating that 'they're just people who live' (line 4). In so doing, the interviewee starts to make clear that lack of action is not necessarily a bad trait.

This point is developed further by portraying inaction as an expression of general lack of awareness rather than a conscious choice. While P23 admits people's passivity ('well yeah they don't do anything', line 4), he follows it with various suggestions that are hearable as explanations for the behaviour. The suggestions are offered through listing at lines 5-9. The first items on the list — 'maybe they're sympathetic (.) to the opposition, maybe not' (line 5) — imply that inaction is not a result of concrete personal attitudes, since people can be sympathetic and yet still remain uninvolved. The next item — 'maybe they simply don't realise [...] that everything is bad' (lines 7, 9) — grounds the idea that

people might be passive *not* because they support what is happening, but because they do not realise that something problematic is taking place. In particular, it is demonstrated by the use of ‘simply’, which suggests that people’s behaviour is not underpinned by a specific logic but stems from the lack of awareness. Perhaps due to lack of uptake in line 10, the interviewee formulates another reason, ‘maybe they don’t even go to vote’ (line 9); ‘even’ here appears to emphasise the degree of detachment from politics and thereby implies that people are not interested in political matters in general and do not simply ignore active protest. P23 thus makes clear that inaction is not an informed choice, but a logical outcome of various factors that prevent people from realising the unfortunate state of affairs (‘that everything is bad’, line 9). Given such lack of awareness, people are seen as not having a strong inclination to protest, which in turn portrays their inaction as understandable and less blameworthy.

Two ideas can therefore be taken from the analysis of this extract. First, the interviewee seems to be sensitive to the negative inferences regarding the non-protesters that the interviewer’s probe entails, and works to downplay them. Second, he does so by describing a number of obstacles to taking action, such as lack of political interest and lack of awareness.

In extracts 2 and 3 below, respondents discuss people who remain uninvolved in protest, and similarly work to imply that those people’s inattention to protest is reasonable given the circumstances. In extract 3, the question in line 1 is asked towards the end of a long narrative about the interviewee’s concern that people in Russia avoid active protest because they think that it will not achieve anything.

Extract 6.2: Protester 14, male, Saint Petersburg

- | | | |
|---|-----|--|
| 1 | YL | and other people (.) people you talked about who’re like (0.2) |
| 2 | | <u>not</u> interested where do you think it’s coming from (0.2) why is that? |
| 3 | | (0.8) |
| 4 | | people are not interested (.) [after all they <u>see</u> |
| 5 | P14 | [well in fact there is- (0.2) |
| 6 | | well you know the point is↑ (.) people might (.) not see |

7 YL mmhm
8 P14 people might (.) see but be afraid
9 YL mmhm
10 P14 um
11 (1)
12 so um (0.2) people might work so much (.) [and work so hard
13 YL [mmhm
14 so it's just like (.) lack of time
15 P14 mm stuff like that (.) and peop- people might have again
16 some personal (0.4) business that requires a lot of their like- um
17 (.) well because of which they cannot go anywhere
18 YL mmhm
19 P14 like (.) react to something (0.4) well it's all quite complicated actually
20 because (0.5) obj- objectively one should have enough time to (.)
21 YL mmhm
22 P14 to do something

Extract 6.3: Protester 27, female, Saint Petersburg

1 YL and why (.) in your opinion (.) why's this feeling that nothing depends on me?
2 P27 well I guess it's fostered in some way yeah (.) because in the media
3 YL mmhm
4 P27 well not in all the media but in printed media in particular in specific regions
5 it's promoted and other regions are on their own, left to live their own lives (.)
6 and well our economic conditions are also not good everywhere
7 and many people are running between jobs (.) children like (.) family
8 YL mmhm
9 P27 and so on and so on yeah (.) and already there's some um (.)
10 people start having this impression that £ my hut is on the edge⁸ yeah £ hh
11 YL aha aha
12 P27 somewhere in the Novaya Gazeta like (.) in the latest issue there was an article
13 about a teach- well about um (0.2) a year ago a village teacher Farber
14 was sentenced [to eight years in prison

⁸ This idiom, 'my hut is on the edge' (*moya hata s krayu*), can be roughly translated into English as 'this is no concern of mine'.

15 YL [aha yes yes I heard about that
 16 P27 ok you're familiar with that yeah (.) so the article mentioned other teachers (.)
 17 who basically didn't support the innocence plea and it explained why yeah
 18 because they are pressured (.) headmasters are pressured
 19 YL mmhm mmhm
 20 P27 and everyone is scared and so on (.) and someone works two and a half jobs and
 21 just physically has no time to do anything else (.) like to protest on the streets

In the beginning of both extracts, the interviewees are probed about the origin of the attitudes they have suggested other people had, the attitudes that prevented those people from taking part in protests: P14 is asked 'the people [...] who're like (0.2) not interested where do you think it's coming from (0.2) why is that?' (2:1-2) and P27 is asked 'why's this feeling that nothing depends on me?' (3:1). Note how the interviewer's probes can be seen to index the attitudes as problematic. First, why-interrogatives by themselves imply that the object of enquiry needs an explanation, and in so doing orient to a possibility that it is in some way inappropriate or unwarranted (Bolden & Robinson, 2011). Second, in extract 2, being uninterested can be seen as problematic behaviour as the interviewer — in her further probe in line 4 — sets it against the awareness of misconduct. She says 'people are not interested (.) [after all they see']; this formulation implies that people should be interested, given what they observe. Although what, exactly, these people 'see' is left implicit, it is plausible to assume that the interviewer refers to some misconduct or improper state of affairs. Portraying someone as knowledgeable but inactive is a powerful device for problematising the behaviour (Watson, 1978), and the interviewer in extract 2 uses it to put forward the idea that having a 'not interested' attitude is problematic and potentially blameworthy. In extract 3, while the interviewer does not explicitly index the feeling that 'nothing depends on me' (line 1) as problematic, it is inferable from the previous conversation, where P27 repeatedly expressed her regrets over such attitude causing protests to die out across Russia.

Thus in both extracts, the suggestion that there is something problematic about being uninterested and hence uninvolved in protest is made 'live' in the interactional context. Similarly to extract 1, here the interviewees address this suggestion and counter

it, by portraying such attitudes and inaction as accountable. Accountability is worked up in two ways.

First, the design of the accounts in itself provides a stronger basis for accountability: note that the interviewees do not limit their answers to a particular explanation, but produce lists of reasons why people might be not involved. Listing is a practice that gives an opportunity to strengthen and amplify the message that is put across (Atkinson, 1984; Jefferson, 1990), and in this case, there are many factors that can prevent people from protesting, rather than their being simply uninterested or unenthusiastic.

Second, the interviewees reduce the deliberateness of non-involvement through identifying three practical obstacles for becoming involved, such as fear, and lack of knowledge and time. In the beginning of her answer in extract 3, P27 openly suggests that discouragement is ‘fostered’ (line 2) and ‘promoted’ (line 5), by ‘the media’ in ‘specific regions’ (line 4). In so doing, she orients to an external factor that influences people’s attitudes. In the case of P14, the first item on his list of reasons — ‘people might (.) not see’ (2:6) — directly addresses, and dismisses, the idea that people intentionally ignore the situation. Here, lack of interest is portrayed as a consequence of lack of knowledge, a suggestion that works to diminish non-participants’ culpability and present their inaction as accountable.

Another obstacle both interviewees orient to is fear. P14 does it by stating that ‘people might (.) see but be afraid’ (2:8), which suggests that a strong emotion can ‘override’ action, with people being aware but too scared to act. Reference to fear is particularly robust here, as in Russia, due to the governmental crackdown on the opposition movement from the beginning of 2012, being imprisoned or attacked by the police during a demonstration is a distinct possibility (Lanskoy & Suthers, 2013; Petrov, Lipman & Hale, 2014). The infamous Bolotnaya Square case is just one example of how mainly peaceful protesters were subjected to harsh criminal sanctions. Hence not protesting on the basis of being scared, even despite the potential awareness of misdeeds, is seen as understandable through such reference to reality. The speaker in the third extract similarly warrants fear as a legitimate reason, when she explains why some teachers did not support another teacher who was unjustly prosecuted (for details of the Farber case

see, for example, Krainova, 2013). While the lack of support is clearly problematic, especially coming from fellow teachers in the context of a highly contested trial, the interviewee accounts for it in lines 18-20, saying ‘they are pressured (.) headmasters are pressured [...] and everyone is scared and so on’. This claim takes agency away from the teachers — they were forced — and portrays fear as a powerful practical obstacle to becoming involved, being felt by ‘everyone’.

Lack of time is yet another obstacle that is indexed as important. Both respondents make clear that people might have responsibilities that require time and effort, and this renders protesting unfeasible. In particular, in extract 2 the interviewee suggests that non-interest is not a matter of personal choice but a consequence of focus on work (‘people might work so much (.) [and work so hard’, line 12). Note that the interviewee corroborates this explanation, by suggesting that it is ‘just like (.) lack of time’ (line 14). ‘Just’ here appears to minimise the significance of non-protesting by restricting the reason for it to something that is both objective and outside of people’s control (Lee, 1987). In lines 16-19, P14 takes his argument further by pointing to ‘some personal (0.4) business’ as the reason why some people ‘cannot go anywhere [...] like (.) react to something’. By using modal verb ‘cannot’, P14 highlights the normative impossibility of behaviour; normativity is further built up in lines 20-22, where the interviewee portrays time as an ‘objective’ condition to taking action. Shortage of such a resource due to work or personal commitments is thus seen as legitimate obstacle to protesting.

The interviewee from extract 3 makes a similar argument when she claims that, since economic conditions are not stable, people end up ‘running between jobs (.) children like (.) family’ (line 7). In the original Russian, she uses the word ‘*krutit’sya*’, which literally means ‘spin’ and conveys the image of people being constantly pressed for time. With this, the speaker implies that the lack of concern (‘my hut is on the edge’, line 10) does not happen by choice but because of objective responsibilities people have to attend to. The role of time is highlighted further in lines 20-21, where P27 states that ‘someone works two and a half jobs and just physically has no time to do anything else’. This further contributes to the suggestion that protesting is practically impossible due to the lack of time, a factor which is not directly related to internal motivation to take action or not.

Hence, both speakers orient to the pressures of time and responsibility, diverting the blame away from non-protesters while presenting them as hardworking and caring people.

To summarise, in the extracts above interviewees account for inaction of other people by identifying a number of obstacles and presenting such obstacles as objective and not dependant on personal wishes. Similar strategies can be seen in extracts 4 and 5 below, although the descriptions of obstacles are not produced in direct response to a question. In extract 4, the speaker spontaneously turns to the topic of public inaction after complaining about generally low protest numbers. In extract 5, the interviewee suggested that Moscow mass protests are not representative of the country as a whole, and claimed that people in the regions/provinces are much more passive.

Extract 6.4: Protester 15, male, Saint Petersburg

- 1 P15 you know how it is now (.) in large cities even there it's difficult yeah↑
2 YL aha
3 P15 so many people they (.) are preoccupied with earning money
4 and basically well (.) all their thoughts are about that
5 (1.8)
6 I understand that somewhere in provinces or somewhere like that
7 where nearly everyone is busy with earning money and it's just really
8 nothing else matters to them
9 (0.5)
10 well it's like this Maslow pyramid something like that
11 YL mmhm
12 P15 that only from certain level of life there appears (.) longing for um (.) higher needs
13 YL mmhm
14 P15 this like (.) need for rights

Extract 6.5: Protester 11, male, Moscow

- 1 P11 it's understandable that um (1.8) well it's difficult life circumstances
2 when there're these rat- rat races (.) when you spend all your time

- 3 on finding- well on surviving basically
- 4 YL mmhm
- 5 P11 well generally speaking in order to survive (.)
- 6 of course you don't care about like (.) it's like Maslow pyramid
- 7 YL mmhm
- 8 P11 um (.) and you don't care about stuff like that (.) about some cultural
- 9 or the like (0.2) some civilisational (0.8) matters

One observation to make here is that, in contrast to the first three extracts of this chapter, even though the interviewer does not solicit an explanation of the public behaviour, speakers account for the inaction of their own accord. Interviewees formulate their explanations so that people's protest inaction is seen as reasonable.

First, this is achieved by positioning people who do not protest within an environment that dictates only the basic priorities. P15 in extract 4 states that 'even [in large cities] it's difficult' (line 1). Note how the factuality of this claim is warranted by presenting it as a part of shared knowledge ('you know how it is now') and by requesting collaborative agreement from the interviewer ('yeah↑'), which she provides in line 2 ('aha'). In implicit contrast to 'large cities', the speaker then orients to the situation 'in provinces or somewhere like that' (line 6), which in effect is seen as being even worse. P15 states that in the regions 'nearly everyone is busy with earning money' (line 7). The extreme case formulation 'nearly everyone' is qualified and therefore especially rhetorically robust for stressing the predominant role the economic factor plays in the life of the people outside of the capitals (Edwards, 2000). Having no other concerns but economic ones ('nothing else matters to them', line 8) is thus seen as understandable within an environment which itself is constructed as the main obstacle to becoming involved with political protest.

Similarly, P11 in extract 5 describes the passivity of the people as 'understandable' (line 1). In justifying this claim, he orients to 'difficult life circumstances' (line 1), which is unpacked as 'rat races' (line 2); this expression grounds the idea that people are engaged in fierce competition for resources. Furthermore, P11 suggests that one's sole focus ('you spend all your time', line 2) is on 'surviving basically' (line 3). Note also that this is a

repair of the earlier 'on finding-'. The accentuated word 'surviving' (*vyzhit*) has more pronounced connotations of struggling against extreme hardship, which places an emphasis on physical needs and implies that people have no time to attend to anything else.

Second, speakers reduce the culpability of the non-involved public by drawing on the rhetoric of argument (Edwards & Potter, 2000), that is, by constructing logical rationale behind the indifference. In so doing, both respondents mobilise a psychological concept, Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943) and use it to describe a process through which people acquire interest in the matters of 'higher order'. In extract 4, the interviewee explains that 'only from certain level of life there appears (.) longing for um (.) higher needs' (line 12); invocation of a psychological concept ('it's like this Maslow pyramid', line 10) makes this explanation discernibly scientific' and hence convincing. In extract 5, the speaker similarly appeals to science by invoking Maslow's theory ('it's like Maslow pyramid', line 6). He additionally justifies indifference to protest as a 'natural' attitude for people who are simply trying to 'survive' (line 5), by asserting that 'of course [one does not] care about [...] some cultural or the like (0.2) some civilisational (0.8) matters' (lines 6, 8-9). The use of 'you' similarly adds veracity to the account, by acting as a subtle inclusive device that can be seen as referring to the listener as a member of 'anybody', thereby suggesting that anybody in such a situation would not care, and contributing to the interviewee's claim that people's behaviour is understandable (Sacks, 1992, Vol. 1, p. 166).

Both interviewees, then, display the recognition of the normatively prescribed character of people's actions under harsh circumstances. The implication here is that by *not* taking part in rights-oriented protests, people in fact behave in ways that are expected and appropriate to their environment. In effect, their non-participation behaviour is accounted for on the grounds of logic and common sense.

This section thus demonstrates how protesters can explain the behaviour of non-protesters by orienting to a variety of external reasons and obstacles and positioning these as responsible for people's inaction. Such constructions reduce the deliberateness of non-protesting and present this behaviour as understandable.

2. 'Traumatised generations': accounting for inaction by portraying it as characteristic of Russian/Soviet people

Another frequently observed strategy of accounting for the behaviour of those who are not involved in protest is by making references to historical and cultural circumstances that foster passivity and indifference. For example, in the following two extracts the interviewees legitimise other people's lack of interest by invoking Russian history. Extract 6 starts with the interviewee expressing his feelings over an incident with his neighbour who refused to support P1's initiative about a local community council, saying that she did not want to 'meddle' with politics. In extract 7, the interviewee has talked about her family who are not interested in joining the protest, and is asked by the interviewer to comment on it further.

Extract 6.6: Protester 1, male, Moscow

- 1 P1 £ damn £ hhh
2 (0.8)
3 I felt so sad
4 YL huh (0.2) and why do you think this is? (.) maybe it happens oft-
5 P1 they're poor deceived people um (0.5) they were first deceived um (.)
6 they were first deceived by (.) communists
7 YL mmhm
8 P11 who started killing them (.) then they were deceived by (.) well there were
9 many who deceived them (.) then they were deceived by Yeltsin, all of them
10 YL mmhm
11 P1 who was like (0.2) solving problems with the parliament using tanks
12 YL mmhm
13 P1 um:: (1) so that's why (.) all of them are disappointed with politics

Extract 6.7: Protester 13, female, Moscow

- 1 YL so you say like people they are not even interested for example
2 your mum (.) my mum (.) why do you think this is (.) where does it come from?
3 P17 well (.) um yeah I think (.) for me as £ someone who is interested in psychology £
4 YL mmhm
5 P17 of course um there's- (.) there is like a great sadness in it↑
6 YL mmhm
7 P17 because I think in our country (.) it's whole generations are traumatised so much
8 YL mmhm mmhm
9 P17 um (0.2) it's just where- wherever you look (.) so it's not even surprising
(*some lines omitted – she says country needs therapy to help people realise their rights*)
10 of course I feel sad watching (.) how (0.8) people themselves continue to allow this
11 YL mmhm
12 P17 to be humiliated to be treated like that to live with this and somehow put up with this
13 YL mmhm mmhm
14 P17 and (.) the way I explain it (.) I explain it because (.) it's just here one after another we have
15 traumatised generations which (0.2) were crushed (0.5) starting with like um (0.2) with what
16 took place after um (0.2) with Stalin to begin with yeah (.) and those terrible terrible things
17 YL mmhm

In both extracts, the interviewer solicits explanations about the behaviour of other people in a way that can imply that such behaviour is problematic. First, in both extracts YL makes people's attitudes accountable with direct why-interrogatives, a design that is frequently used for orienting to potential accountability issues (Bolden & Robinson, 2011). Indeed, in the above extracts the interviewees appear to treat YL's questions in this way, as offering puzzles for them to explain. In extract 6, the 'why do you think this is?' at line 4 is quite unspecific and can be taken to be about why P1 is sad; however, the interviewee clearly treats it as an enquiry about why people reject politics by formulating the upshot in line 13 ('so that's why'). In extract 7, the interviewer says that 'people they are not even interested' (line 1); stressing the fact of indifference can be seen as implying that such behaviour is puzzling, especially considering that they are the family, specifically mothers (line 2), a category that is expected to care for and support their children. The interviewee

treats this as something requiring an explanation and she explicitly positions her account as such ('the way I explain it (.) I explain it because', line 14).

Formulating explanations for other people's behaviour, interviewees portray the attitudes in question — being uninterested/disappointed in politics — as habitual ways of thinking, typical for Russian people as a collective. In extract 6, this is done by shifting the focus from a particular person, a neighbour who refused to support P1's protest initiative, to a much broader 'they' ('they're poor deceived people', line 5; 'all of them are disappointed with politics', line 13). This shift enables P1 to portray the lack of political initiative as a commonplace characteristic. In extract 7, it is arguably the interviewer who first alludes to the idea that the lack of interest is commonplace, when she uses collective 'people' (line 1) and implies that it affects her own family too ('your mum (.) my mum'). P13 develops this idea by stating that 'whole generations' (line 7) are affected with the same mind set, allowing themselves 'to be humiliated' and continuing to 'somehow put up with this' (line 12).

The mind set is described as a direct result of being subjected to consistent and widespread mistreatment by political agents. In extract 6, the speaker shows it by stating that people were 'deceived' numerous times: 'they were first deceived' (lines 5-6), 'then they were deceived' (line 8), 'there were many who deceived them' (lines 8-9). The technique of listing here enables P1 to portray deceit as a recurrent 'fact' of Russia's history. Likewise, in extract 7 the interviewee conveys the feeling of unfairness as consistent, when she says that generations of people were traumatised 'here one after another' (line 14). Furthermore, she uses an extreme case adverb to stress the prevalence of it ('it's just where- wherever you look', line 9). Note that both speakers attribute responsibility for unfair treatment to a particular agent, namely people in (political) power, such as 'communists' and 'Yeltsin' (6:6, 9) and 'Stalin' (7:16). Governments are expected to have a certain responsibility for their subjects; 'killing' (6:8) and 'crushing' (7:15) them is thus seen as gross misconduct. Reinforcing this image is the feeling of sadness that the respondents convey, P1 by explicitly saying that he is 'so sad' (6:3) and describing people as 'poor' (6:5) and P13 by stating that 'there is like a great sadness in it' (7:5) and portraying her feeling of sadness as expectable ('of course I feel sad', 7:10). In effect,

people appear as helpless victims of state transgressions, which makes their apathetic attitude more convincing.

Finally, P1 and P13 establish a causal link between past negative experience and the present lack of action, thereby justifying indifference as the expected reaction. This is achieved by using the conjunction ‘so’: P1 says ‘so that’s why (.) all of them are disappointed with politics’ (6:13) and P13 says ‘so [being not interested] it’s not even surprising’ (7:9). By means of their accounts, then, interviewees make public lack of interest and disappointment in political protest intelligible and hence justified. In comparison to the accounts presented in the first section, here the explanations are linked to the historical development of the country overall and depict inaction as a predictable result of such development.

Extracts 8 and 9 are further examples of history-related accounts, where matters of participation and non-participation are discussed in terms of being raised in a particular ‘Soviet’ culture. There, interviewees are invited by the interviewer to discuss why certain people stay away from active protest. In extract 8, in the previous talk the interviewee had reported seeing very few middle-aged people at demonstrations.

Extract 6.8: Protester 43, male, Saint Petersburg

- 1 YL and what about middle-aged people for example (.)
2 what do you think for them (.) are they (0.5) not interested um?
3 P43 um (.) well why not? they are interested it’s just um (.) it’s some um (0.5)
4 they’re still (.) let’s say a Soviet generation (.) well (0.2) they were brought up differently
5 YL mmhm
6 P43 well basically it’s difficult to explain but (.) it’s like well (.) um us (0.5)
7 we’re basically the first post-Soviet generation who um (1.2) well (.)
8 we don’t see (0.2) the point in (.) sitting in kitchens as it was during the Soviet rule
9 YL mmhm
10 P43 and like um (.) to express our protest through that
11 YL mmhm mmhm

Extract 6.9: Protester 25, male, Saint Petersburg

- 1 YL can we talk about the people who don't (0.8) I mean who see all this but (0.2)
2 well (.) I'm certain that they surely see (.) but somehow they-
3 P25 they see but (.) um you know (.) the whole point I guess is in upbringing
4 YL aha
5 P25 um (.) let's say we have little youth now (0.2) it's well (.) any statistics would say so
6 YL mmhm mmhm
7 P25 predominantly now we have people who (.) were born and lived (.)
8 for quite a long time in (.) the Soviet Union
9 YL mmhm mmhm
10 P25 so (.) I think this is the main reason um (0.2) why Moscow didn't get that million
11 YL aha aha
12 P25 so um (.) it's because of (.) um well let's say Soviet government brought people up in a way
13 that (0.2) *here you have the general secretary who thinks for you, who gives you jobs* like um
14 *(0.5) gives medicine schools and so on that's it (.) you don't have to worry about anything*
15 YL mmhm mmhm

An interesting feature of these two accounts is how the category of 'Soviet' is introduced as an explanatory construct for people's protest inaction.

First, interviewees shift the topic from people's subjective interest/awareness to matters of their upbringing. In extract 8, this is done in response to the interviewer's probe, which implies that middle-aged people are not interested in joining protests ('are they (0.5) not interested um?', line 2). In line 3, P43 uses a rhetorical question ('well why not?') to imply that there is no good reason to accept lack of interest as a valid explanation (Billig, 1996), and then explicitly affirms the presence of interest ('they are interested', line 3). In so doing, the speaker discounts personal interest as a significant factor. In turn, he offers a competing explanation, saying that 'they were brought up differently' (line 4). The speaker in extract 9 does a similar thing. While he agrees with the interviewer in line 3 that people might 'see' (presumably) the unfortunate state of affairs, note how he immediately refocuses attention from the subject of personal awareness to that of nurture, saying that 'the whole point I guess is in upbringing'. In so doing, he dismisses the causal

link between seeing and acting, embedded in the interviewer's turn at lines 1-2; 'the whole point' additionally grounds 'upbringing' as the dominant factor.

Having discounted the importance of personal factors, speakers portray non-participation as a consequence of certain category membership. P43 emphasises that middle-aged people are 'still (.) let's say a Soviet generation' (8:4); in a similar manner, P25 makes relevant the category of Soviet people through suggesting that the majority of people in Russia were born and raised in the Soviet Union (9:7-8). So both interviewees can be seen to utilise the reference to Soviet times and its people — the proverbial 'Soviet man' (Rose et al., 2011) or 'Homo Soveticus' (Boobbyer, 2000) — which, to members of Russian culture at least, is conventionally bound to a set of anti-protest dispositions, such as reluctance to criticise the regime openly, as in Soviet times when it entailed rather serious consequences (see chapter 1 for details). Suggesting that many non-protesters are essentially 'Soviet' and thus share 'Soviet' dispositions is a way to implicitly display their non-protesting behaviour as normal and hence accountable.

Explicitly, such category-bound attributes are worked up by giving examples of Soviet people's mentality. In extract 8, P43 makes a comparison between the 'Soviet' and 'post-Soviet' generations, and states that the latter 'don't see (0.2) the point in (.) sitting in kitchens as it was during the Soviet rule [...] and like um (.) to express our protest through that' (lines 8-10). The described activity — 'sitting in kitchens' — is one of the archetypal 'political' activities for ordinary people in the Soviet Union, when political debates usually took place in the safety of one's flat among friends and family; it is also a private activity and is therefore not easy to observe. In describing it, the interviewee reinforces the image of middle-aged people being led by a different set of values, making his explanation more convincing. In extract 9, the interviewee explicitly characterises Soviet upbringing as the reason why the majority of people did not join active protests ('this is the main reason um (0.2) why Moscow didn't get that million', line 10). Furthermore, P25 uses reported speech to demonstrate the sort of attitude that he suggests was ingrained in people in Soviet times. In particular, in lines 13-14 he depicts people as reliant on the state in virtually every aspect of their lives, including jobs ('*who gives you jobs*'), social benefits such as '*medicine schools and so on*' and even judgement ('*the*

general secretary who thinks for you'). The implication here is that being conditioned to rely on the state, people 'naturally' feel less willing (or even able) to challenge the government that is perceived as the main 'provider'.

In effect, both accounts warrant inaction as a characteristic trait of the members of Soviet culture, a matter-of-course outcome of mentality that developed under specific historical circumstances of living in the Soviet Union.

The speaker in the final extract in this section also makes a number of references to the 'Soviet' mind set, although there the characterisations are not produced in direct response to the interviewer's probe. The interviewee talks about being involved in a protest against unfair distribution of manufacturing orders for the factory he used to work at. He recalls how, while he was determined to organise a demonstration, the CEO and the factory's labour union members became 'scared' of expressing their dissatisfaction and refused to participate. The reproduced fragment is the last part of this story, where he offers explanations for such behaviour.

Extract 6.10: Protester 28, male, Volgograd

- 1 P28 our people (.) as it were (.) they don't stand up for each other
2 YL mmhm
3 P28 well maybe somewhere there'll be a passing row (.) or if it's like completely-
4 um (.) if they're driven completely to the edge then maybe they'd rouse
5 YL aha
6 P28 knowing this (.) what employers do? (.) they take (.) the lion's share of profit for themselves
7 YL mmhm
8 P28 and um (.) to the people they leave ten to twelve thousand roubles salary (.) *is he alive?*
9 (.) well it's the same as slaves you know?
10 YL mmhm mmhm
11 P28 *is he not dead? is he still alive? well it seems he's alive (.) it's general level*
12 *and what do you expect? (.) it's just the general level it's like this*
13 YL mmhm mmhm
14 P28 and (0.5) for themselves um they raise their general level to (.) billionaire status
15 YL mmhm

16 P28 yachts and so on, billions (.) where on earth do they put it (0.2) difficult to imagine
 17 YL yeah
 18 P28 but (.) we allow them to do this
 19 YL mmhm
 20 P28 just (.) just um because we have not yet (.) formed as a society unfortunately
 21 YL mmhm
 22 P28 so (0.2) or it's that lengthy Soviet (.) period when (0.8) things were thought for us
 23 YL mmhm
 24 P28 everything was decided for us, for us um (.) excuse my language (.) let's say (.)
 25 all our bottoms were wiped for us
 26 YL mmhm
 27 P28 everything (.) all sweat was cleaned um (.) let's say we were fussed over
 28 YL mmhm
 29 P28 we um (.) actually (.) we didn't appreciate it yeah↑
 30 YL mmhm mmhm
 31 P28 but it truly was like that (.) I mean for us everything was decided (.) like
 32 *kindergarten? everything will be done (.) a flat? there'll be a flat for you*
 33 YL mmhm
 34 P28 *you just (.) do like this work like this and then you'll have a flat and a kindergarten*
 35 *and um (.) all the rest*
 36 YL mmhm
 37 P28 and that (.) led to people (.) stop fighting for their rights

The interviewee begins by producing a claim that Russian people 'don't stand up for each other' (line 1). With this, P28 presents the lack of mutual support to be a disposition that is characteristic of Russians as a nation. He reinforces this claim by 'softening' it (Edwards, 2000). That is, he makes it less absolute by citing a potential counter example: 'maybe somewhere there'll be a passing row' (line 3). Note, however, how this description denigrates potential action by presenting it as short-lived ('passing') and trivial ('row'). Moreover, the interviewee makes a reference to the involuntary nature of such actions, suggesting that they happen because people are 'driven completely to the edge' (line 4). The descriptive term 'rouse' (*vstrepenut'sya*; line 4) aids such understanding by implying that people act only under extreme pressure.

Asserting the lack of protest as inherent together with certain ‘facts’ from the preceding story — for example, P28 insists that because of the inaction of the factory’s labour union the demonstration was called off — can give an impression that P28 blames Russian people for their lack of protest involvement. However, he actively directs the blame away from the people who do not protest and makes a complaint about the employers instead. Employers’ behaviour is constructed as ‘complainable about’ in various ways. First, through a direct report of their unfair actions, such as taking ‘the lion’s share of profit for themselves’ (line 6), giving minimal salary to their employees (line 8) and treating them ‘the same as slaves’ (line 9). Second, P28 uses direct speech in lines 11-12 to make the complaint more factual. Direct speech was shown to have critical functions, serving to implicitly condemn those to whom it is attributed (Benwell, 2012; Stokoe & Edwards, 2007): attributing discernibly cynical and mendacious remarks to employers enables P28 to indicate that they are at fault. Finally, employers’ behaviour is indexed as problematic through a telling juxtaposition of the two standards of living: the low standard of the people that their employers present as the norm (*‘and what do you expect? (.) it’s just the general level’*, line 12) as opposed to the ‘billionaire status’ of the employers (line 14). By making clear that it is the employers who are at fault, the interviewee diverts the blame away from the people who do not protest.

Although allocation of blame enables P28 to present ordinary workers as not blameworthy, the following claim — ‘but (.) we allow them to do this’ — can again be perceived as a potential accusation. Note, however, how it is immediately followed by an explanatory account that makes clear that people’s passivity is not a product of their free will but a consequence of their collective Soviet dispositions.

This is achieved in two ways. First, the interviewee displays an active stance as unattainable. In line 20, he suggests that people stay passive ‘just um because we have not yet (.) formed as a society’, and thus makes the readiness to protest into a criterial feature of the ‘society’, a stage that Russia has reportedly not yet reached. This claim normalises passivity as the only available option for Russians.

Second, P28 describes the Soviet regime as having a causal role in the development of the passive attitude. In line 22, he formulates the second explanatory

account — ‘or it’s that lengthy Soviet (.) period’ (line 22) — through which the behaviour of the people is tied to the category of ‘Soviet’. The second explanatory account takes the form of a three-part list, through which P28 displays the totality of ‘care’ the Soviet state provided for its people: 1. ‘things were thought for us’ (line 22); 2. ‘everything was decided for us’ (line 24); 3. ‘all our bottoms were wiped for us’ (line 25). Extreme case formulations ‘everything’ and ‘all’, and, further, ‘all sweat was cleaned’ (line 27) and ‘everything was decided’ (line 31) maximise the degree of state involvement in people’s lives; they also make the account discernibly nonliteral, conveying the meaning of being ‘essentially so’ (Edwards, 2000). Edwards suggests that nonliteral extreme case formulations are often used to perform irony, and the given account can also be understood in that way: social welfare is generally a positive thing, but P28 ridicules it by highlighting its pervasiveness, desire to control even the most private actions such as ‘wiping bottoms’ and ‘cleaning sweat’. In addition, P28 uses direct speech to orient to the paradox of the welfare system, with social benefits shown to be a type of reward for complying with the state: *‘you just (.) do like this, work like this and then you’ll have a flat and a kindergarten and um (.) all the rest’* (lines 34-35). These descriptions help P28 to establish the influence of the state as negative and powerful. In the final upshot in line 37, the interviewee reinforces the causal link between living under authoritative state and non-challenging and passive behaviour, emphasising that *‘that (.) led to people (.) stop fighting for their rights’*.

To reiterate, the extract explains inaction in terms of people’s past living environment and through acknowledging its overbearing effect on their current behaviour. P28’s account justifies the current lack of protest by taking responsibility for it away from the people and placing it instead on the historical system of government that inculcated inaction. In this way, the history itself becomes a kind of obstacle on the way to protesting.

In summary, in this section I have shown how the interviewees can deal with the topic of others’ inaction through making references to the Soviet culture and its oppressive effect on the people. In so doing, the interviewees attend to and disregard the suggestion (often alluded to by the interviewer) that people should be held accountable for not protesting.

3. 'It's surely very important too': justifying other ways of meaningful involvement

In this last empirical section, I look at a slightly different way of addressing the issue of inaction — not by formulating various explanations for people's passivity, but by arguing that people can be involved in other ways. In the following extract, the interviewee tells a story about having an argument with his friend, an actor in a children's theatre, about protest involvement. The account is notable for its design: the explanation here is solicited not by the interviewer, but by the interviewee himself, through a reported dialogue he describes.

Extract 6.11: Protester 4, male, Moscow

- 1 P4 and there I am getting ready to go to yet another demonstration and I say ((name))↑
2 (0.2) *let's g- after all you see what is happening (.) how's that how can you*
3 YL mmhm
4 P4 he says ((P4 name))↑ *at your age I was the same* he's like (.) older than me by ten years
5 YL mmhm
6 P4 and he says *I was completely the same and it's normal you should go* he says (0.2)
7 *but myself* he says *I understand everything I won't go (.)*
8 *I say but how so↑ (.) what kind of (.) indifference is that?*
9 YL mmhm
10 P4 he says (P4 name) *I'm (0.2) glad for you I think that you going is right but as for me*
11 *I can for example (0.5) well I say you're no- um (.) you have to participate in some way*
12 YL mmhm
13 P4 and he says *for example I (0.5) play as an actor in plays for children (0.2)*
14 *I play in um fairy-tales for children where like honesty*
15 YL mmhm
16 P4 *ethics (.) bravery are praised (0.5) he says I play for the children (.) what do you think*
17 *this kind of my like (0.2) participation it is um (.) surely also important*
18 YL mmhm
19 P4 *that I foster that in children (.) it's surely very important too*
20 YL mmhm so he does it too somehow (.) in his way

21 P4 yeah yeah
 22 (0.5)
 23 well back then I didn't £ agree with him £
 24 YL hhhh [hhh
 25 P4 £ back then I was ecstatic (.) in oppositional [ecstasy hh £

In the beginning of the extract, the interviewee positions himself as a regular protester by saying that he was 'getting ready to go to yet another demonstration' (line 1). P4 also makes clear that his friend was unwilling to go even though P4 invited him. In the first part of the account, such unwillingness is displayed as problematic.

Similar to some extracts above, this is done through the 'assertion of knowledge' claim, which the interviewee uses to aggravate the seriousness of protest inaction. Specifically, P4 points to the fact that his friend refused to join him *despite* being aware of issues taking place ('*after all you see what is happening*', line 2). An interesting twist here is that P4's friend is shown to agree with him but *still* refuses to go: 'he says *I understand everything I won't go*' (line 7). Watson (1978) suggested that excuses about one's behaviour often deal with what he calls a 'calculable choice model' (p. 112), a way of reasoning about whether the actions are taken knowingly and in the absence of coercion or threat. As we saw in sections 1 and 2 above, speakers indeed address this, by claiming that people can be excused for their inaction because their behaviour is not intentional, being influenced by external obstacles or the ways in which they were brought up. Here, however, the interviewee does not negate having knowledge or intent — from the reported words it is inferred that his friend *chooses* not to join P4. The friend's reported utterances also suggest that he supports and understands protesting overall ('*it's normal you should go*' he says', line 6; '*I think that you going is right*', line 10) and used to protest himself ('*at your age I was the same*', line 4; 'he says *I was completely the same*', line 6). These two inferences — that inaction is intentional and is not due to lack of understanding — justify P4's initial accusations and, at this point at least, make his story hearable as a complaint (Haakana, 2007). Moreover, in line 8 P4 describes his own reaction in such a way that his friend's actions come across as puzzling and blameworthy ('I say *but how so↑ (.) what kind of (.) indifference is that?*').

While assumption of inaction as culpable is embedded in the first part of the account, P4 constructs the rest of the story so that his friend's lack of protest action is seen as less problematic, in the light of other things he does. At line 11, the interviewee makes a reference to a different kind of involvement: he reports himself saying that people 'have to participate in some way'. While this formulating presents participation as a normative expectation ('have to'), it also seems to tacitly suggest that there might be other ways of being involved ('in some way'). In so doing, P4 sets the scene for the defence account. This account is developed by orienting to the friend's job: '*I play in um fairy-tales for children where like honesty [...] ethics (.) bravery are praised* (0.5) he says *I play for the children*' (lines 14-16). The utterance and the three-part list here invoke the significance of communicating moral principles to children. The significance is reinforced through reported evaluation, when the friend says '*this kind of my like (0.2) participation it is um (.) surely also important*' (line 17) and '*that I foster that in children (.) it's surely very important too*' (line 19), with 'also' and 'too' displaying an understanding that people can make valuable contributions without taking to the streets. Note also how this understanding is further co-constructed in lines 20-21, where the interviewer displays her recognition of P4's point, that his friend is not, indeed, inactive ('so he does it too somehow (.) in his way'), and the interviewee corroborates this ('yeah yeah').

The interviewee, however, seems to be sensitive to the possibility that such an 'ordinary' contribution risks coming across as not important enough. In particular, he admits that initially he did not agree with his friend, but at the same time signals his recognition that the disagreement had been unjustified. First, disagreement is portrayed as a thing of the past ('back then I didn't £ agree with him', line 23), thereby implying that now P4 understands and accepts his friend's contribution. Second, disagreement is explained in terms of P4 being 'ecstatic (.) in oppositional [ecstasy]' (line 25), which is said in a smiley voice. Formulated and delivered in that way, the utterance comes across as self-depreciation, implying that P4 was swept away by the protest frenzy and failed to recognise the actual value of his friend's contribution. The interviewer also seems to treat it as humorous self-depreciation, as she laughs at line 22.

In effect, the behaviour that was initially cast as problematic and blame-worthy — unwillingness to join a demonstration — is accounted for, on the grounds of a jointly produced understanding that there are other, more ‘local’ and mundane ways of staying meaningfully involved.

Instances of such accounting strategy are seen across the data, but as they tend to appear spontaneously, often in the middle of lengthy accounts, it is difficult to analyse them sequentially. As I have shown, in the majority of extracts in this chapter explanations are given against the backdrop of an explicit or implicit suggestion that non-involvement in protest is accountable and potentially blameworthy. While the following three extracts do not follow a suggestion of blame directly, there the participants make a very similar argument to the speaker in extract 11, that there are various ways for people to be involved. Moreover, the speakers in these extracts suggest that such alternative ways are, in fact, more meaningful than street protests. In extract 12, the interviewee talks about people who appear to be passive and non-involved, and gives an example. In extract 13, the speaker discusses the reasons for the decline of active street protest. In extract 14, the respondent answers the question ‘what’s opposition for you?’ and has just mentioned that for her ‘the opposition’ are not necessarily the people who are actively involved in protest.

Extract 6.12: Protester 45, male, Samara

- 1 P45 there is one company I mean it’s also some communal well (.) sort of small communal
- 2 association and so (0.5) um (.) they were planting um (.) they had an outing to plant
- 3 (0.2) trees here at the Lenin avenue (.) with them I’d go happily (0.5) it’s just trees yeah (.)
- 4 they’ve chipped in together whatever they had yeah (.) they bought some (.) some like
- 5 ten or twelve trees (.) we planted them it’s great like (.) there are trees growing
- 6 and it’s like real work (.) you know
- 7 YL mmhm
- 8 P45 but (.) go to demonstrations (.) um wave like (.) a placard there (.) it’s- it’s (.)
- 9 well what (0.2) can it gain↑ (0.2) commotion and shattering of public opinion

Extract 6.13: Protester 16, male, Saint Petersburg

- 1 P16 people start to address slightly different issues (.) I mean they focus more on some personal
2 (0.5) business and projects (.) that work for common goal rather than (0.2) um
3 political activism per se
*((some lines omitted – he gives examples of local St Petersburg groups and talks about
creating a newspaper for his local community))*
4 we issue news (.) every day um (0.2) we tell what's happening in the life of (.) the district
5 YL mmhm
6 P16 um (.) highlight (0.2) some problems issues that the residents complain about (.)
7 what makes them dissatisfied
8 YL mmhm
9 P16 um that's important (.) maybe we'll be doing some (.) public actions about those matters
10 YL mmhm
11 P16 but (.) all this it's not um (.) like, we don't run around with 'down with Putin' placards

Extract 6.14: Protester 24, female, Saint Petersburg

- 1 P24 people (can) um (.) very rarely go to protest actions um but they understand
2 and they do something because of that
3 YL mmhm
4 P24 they behave differently
5 YL mmhm
6 P24 they don't give bribes on principle
7 YL mm mmhm it's like (.) you've said with their own example [they do it
8 P24 [yes with they own example
9 not because they go to demonstrations, shout with banners in hands and (.) so on
10 but specifically (.) with their own quiet (.) it can be quiet
11 YL mmhm mmhm
12 P24 example (.) with their life (.) with responsibility for their own lives, for (.) other people

I would like to make two observations about extracts 12 to 14. First, all three interviewees describe activities that are not street protests but are portrayed as making a valuable contribution to society. Notably, the activities interviewees refer to are seen as

more ‘mundane’ in comparison to organised street protests, by placing an emphasis on local character of the work.

P45 gives an example of a ‘small communal association’ (12:1-2) who was planting trees in his area; he invokes routine character of this activity (‘it’s just trees’, 12:3) and points to the local scale of events (‘they’ve chipped in together whatever they had yeah (.) they bought some (.) some like ten or twelve trees’, 12:4-5). At the same time, he highlights the benefit the deed has brought (‘we planted them it’s great like (.) there are trees growing’, 12:5). P16 discusses importance of ‘personal (0.5) business and projects (.) that work for common goal’ (13:1-2) and gives example of his own contribution to ‘the life of (.) the district’ (13:4) through publishing a local newspaper. His account prioritises the ‘problems issues’ (13:6) that local residents have and describes attending to these as ‘important’ (13:9). P24 praises people who show ‘responsibility for their own lives, for (.) other people’ (14:12) and makes clear that commendable behaviour is not always public. Specifically, she suggests that meaningful actions can be ‘quiet’ (14:10) and more mundane, such as not giving bribes (14:6) and staying true to one’s principles even if it means behaving ‘differently’ (14:4).

All three speakers, then, display their understanding that people can be involved through ‘ordinary’ day-to-day actions, which aim to benefit their local communities. Second, such local/mundane actions are constructed as meaningful ‘real work’, by contrasting them with street protests. This is done by describing protest activity in such a way that it appears shallow and inefficient.

In extract 12, the speaker says ‘go to demonstrations (.) um wave like (.) a placard there (.) it’s- it’s (.) well what (0.2) can it gain↑’ (lines 8-9). This formulation degrades the act of protesting in two ways: first, the verb ‘wave’ (*mahat*) focuses attention on physical movement of one’s hands and as such implies that there is little meaning in protesting; second, via rhetorical question P45 makes a point that demonstrations cannot yield positive changes. The interviewee strengthens this view by proposing an ‘obvious’ answer (as it follows a clearly rhetorical question), that street protesting entails negative consequences such as ‘commotion and shattering of public opinion’ (line 9). This comes in stark contrast with an earlier example of planting trees, which P45 calls ‘real work’

(line 6). In extract 13, the interviewee compares ‘work for common goal’ with ‘political activism per se’ (lines 2-3) and implies that people’s interest in the latter is decreasing. He also makes clear that he and his fellow newspaper publishers are not involved in public protest, saying ‘we don’t run around with ‘down with Putin’ placards’ (line 11). Here too, protesting is designed to appear meaningless by placing focus on its physical side (‘run around’) and stereotyping its demands (‘with ‘down with Putin’ placards’). Finally, in extract 14, the speaker claims that understanding does not need to manifest in active protest participation (line 1); rather, ‘it can be quiet’ (line 10). She also downplays the value of going to demonstrations, by portraying it as a purely physical exercise — ‘go to demonstrations, shout with banners in hands’ (line 9) — and contrasts it with behaviour done ‘on principle’ (line 6).

It can be seen, then, how the speakers use descriptions to present street protests as less meaningful and less useful than some ‘mundane’ actions. In so doing, they strengthen the understanding that people can be involved in various ways and should not be held accountable simply on the basis of not protesting on the streets.

This section has demonstrated how speakers can creatively address the topic of inaction, not by formulating reasons for it but by negotiating the meaning of inaction itself. The result of such negotiations is the alternative view of involvement, where people are considered active even though they do not participate in street demonstrations. Rather, the emphasis there is made on moral and meaningful personal acts, through which one is seen as contributing to society and making it better.

Discussion

This chapter analysed interview extracts related to the topic of other people’s protest inaction. The general analytic finding of this chapter is that protesters tend not to blame other people for their protest inaction; on the contrary, interviewees formulated various explanations of why people might remain uninvolved. Specifically, the first section illustrated how, by referencing various practical obstacles, interviewees can reduce the deliberateness of protest-related indifference and portray not being involved in active

protest as reasonable behaviour. In the second section, I showed how interviewees accounted for people's inaction by invoking national/generational Soviet characteristics and presenting them as responsible for the lack of protest. The third section demonstrated a slightly different accounting strategy, where speakers described more local and mundane forms of involvement, while simultaneously downplaying the value of overt street protest.

These strategies appear particularly useful for managing the dilemma I described in the introduction to this chapter — that protest is portrayed as important, but it is not supported by the majority of people: through them, respondents attributed protest inaction to the reasons that went beyond simple lack of interest, thus preserving the value of protest up to a point. While the third section showed that street demonstrations *could* be characterised as comparatively less efficient and meaningful, speakers there did imply that being active itself is still important. As such, analysis in this section suggests that speakers are sensitive to potential contradictions that might result from their claims and organise their accounts in ways that prevent inconsistency and contradiction.

In what follows, I would like to discuss three ideas related to the analysis.

First, the analyses suggest that talking about others is an interactionally sensitive activity; specifically, that complaining about others and presenting them as being to blame for their behaviour is something that my participants avoided. In broader terms, this is in line with the research of other conversational analysts who have suggested that talk-in-interaction is often designed to avoid conflict and advance solidarity and affiliation (Clayman, 2002; Grancea, 2010; Heritage, 1984; Stivers & Robinson, 2006; Stivers, Mondada & Steensig, 2011). More specifically, blaming may be a particularly significant and sensitive issue for my participants: in the interview context, they are seen as unaffiliated, 'casual' protesters, and thus arguably closer to 'ordinary' people rather than to devoted political activists. Due to such ordinariness, taking the perspective of the moral high ground and criticising others can be risky, as the criticism can be turned against the interviewees by suggesting that they themselves do not protest enough. By not blaming, speakers might be seen to inoculate themselves against such accusations; by pointing to various practical obstacles, job constraints and alternative ways of involvement, they display an awareness that becoming actively involved is not an easy task.

Second, talking about others in non-judgemental ways allows interviewees to put forward a message of similarity and thus manage issues of inclusion/exclusion (Gamson, 1997). It has been argued in the literature on Russian protest that pro-governmental propaganda strives to segregate protesters and oppositional activists as members of a specific foreign-imposed (and thus also threatening) culture that has very little in common with ordinary ‘people’ (*narod*) of Russia (Kal’k, 2012; Pomerantsev, 2015). It can be suggested that by accounting for people’s inaction and constructing public inaction as intelligible, interviewees display their understanding of the issues that non-protesters might have, which in turn contests the idea that they are disconnected from the majority. Such a message of inclusion, that protesters are a part of the majority, might be useful in the promotion of the concept of the importance of social solidarity for any protest movement (cf. Gromov, 2012). Non-blaming through pointing to economic and work constraints is particularly robust here, as it gives the impression that protesters are very much aware of the issues that people in the regions have, and counters the image of protesters as rich ‘creacles’ (members of creative class) and carefree ‘hipsters’ from the capitals. Hence, interviewees’ constructions can be seen as resources for dealing with the moral sensitivities of blaming others, due to both general conversational orientations towards affiliation and interpersonal issues related to protesting in Russia.

Finally, the findings have an important implication for social psychology of protest research, in particular for the social psychological model of politicised identity. Overall, the findings support previous research that suggests that protesters would try to affiliate with the wider public in order to mobilise public support (Simon & Klandermans, 1998). As I argued above, warranting practices enable protesters to make available the idea that they are included in society due to their sympathy to and knowledge of it. As part of the society, they are therefore entitled to its support. My analysis thus shows one of the potential ways through which affiliation can be done conversationally, through practices of accounting and non-blaming. My findings thus draw attention to the fact that inclusion/exclusion are not purely cognitive and automatic processes but are closely tied to the specific contexts and interpersonal issues at stake.

Next, in the final chapter of this thesis, I will bring together the findings of the four empirical chapters and discuss some overarching themes and concerns.

Chapter 7. General discussion and conclusions

The aim of my study was to address questions about how protesters in Russia construct and negotiate their protest involvement in interaction. In order to do this, I used the approach of discursive social psychology to analyse conversational interviews with people who took part in the 2011-2012 wave of protests in Russia. Specifically, I examined how, through subtle use of language, people explained the following things: the way they became interested in politics and protest; how they justified the necessity of engaging in active protest; how they negotiated their oppositional selves, and at the same time, made accountable cases of not being involved. Overall, my research demonstrated that the phenomenon of protest behaviour could be fruitfully investigated as a product of orderly local social practices, in and through talk.

In this final chapter, I summarise the main analytic findings. I discuss theoretical, methodological and practical implications of my research and provide some personal reflections on the work, focusing in particular on its limitations and potential ways to develop the research further. I finish the thesis with a brief conclusion that ties together the main ‘take-home’ messages of the study.

Summary of the main findings

In this section, I provide an overview of my empirical findings, without going too deeply into exploring concerns that potentially informed such findings. A detailed discussion of the variety of interpersonal and normative concerns that seem to inform protesters’ talk will be provided in the second section.

The first empirical chapter (Chapter 3) focused on arguments relating to the protesters’ interest in politics and the socio-political situation in Russia. It demonstrated how respondents attend to and display political attitudes as accountable matters, by manufacturing various explanations as to why they became interested in the domains of politics and protest. In particular, political interest was portrayed as being fostered by the people who speakers considered to be their friends or loved ones; in other words, by

significant others. I argued that characterising such people as significant was strategic, in that it discursively normalised the very fact of being influenced, insofar as it is natural for people to be affected by those close to them. Alternatively, interest was presented as a direct but unintentional result of a problematic experience, a ‘key moment’ that made a speaker realise that something unfair and troublesome was going on. In these accounts, speakers used discursive devices, such as the formulation ‘I was just doing X ... when Y’, to warrant the unintentional character of witnessing a disturbing situation and depicting such a situation as directly responsible for their turning political. Conversely, interviewees displayed their own political interest as an outcome of gradual learning about the political situation, often during professional development. These accounts were specifically designed to highlight the lack of initial intention to acquire political knowledge, thereby inoculating speakers against having personal stakes in it.

Furthermore, the data evidenced that the topic of political interest was addressed with the reference to attitudinal change. In a number of accounts, talk of ‘change’ can be seen as solicited by the interviewer, due to her question providing the orientation to change (the question was formulated as ‘Can you tell me a bit about yourself, that is, have you been interested in the socio-political situation in Russia and have your views changed?’). On other occasions, however, respondents invoked the idea of change without being prompted by a question. Overall, the analysis showed that speakers made an effort to present themselves as not having been interested in the past, by orienting to a transition from this lack of interest in the past to becoming interested in the present. Moreover, interviewees mobilised various discursive resources to imply that they did not intend to become interested in politics. I argued that in so doing, respondents displayed their initial neutrality regarding the political, which in turn contributed to the construction of accountability. At the same time, I suggested that speakers’ defences of the unintentional nature of turning political indicated that they treated the topic of politics as problematic or sensitive. Supporting this was the observation that interviewees also attended to inferences concerning *not* having political interests in the past. I have shown how interviewees persuasively constructed their past lack of interest as convincing and justified, by using various discursive devices, such as extreme case formulations and references to

the cultural context. This finding additionally demonstrated that talking about politics on the whole seemed to be a sensitive business for my interviewees.

Overall, the analysis supported the results of previous discursive research, which highlighted the important role descriptions of problematic situations might play in manufacturing the authenticity of protesters' attitudes and interests (Benford, 1987; Hunt & Benford, 1993; Polletta, 2006). In my analysis, I suggested that the accounts of experiences that speakers identified as significant for the transformation of their attitudes and interests were designed to invite a conclusion that the change from apolitical to politically interested was natural and plausible, in the sense that it was brought about by specific events rather than appearing simply by itself. As such, accounts of interest acquisition functioned to present protesters as having strong grounds for turning political. At the same time, the analysis provided evidence that being *apolitical* in Russia is not as unproblematic an attitude as some scholars have suggested earlier.

The findings of the first empirical chapter also offered further insight into the theoretical concepts of 'mobilisation potential' (Klandermans, 1997; Klandermans & Oegema, 1987) and 'conscience adherents' (McCarthy & Zald, 1977), which suggest that active protest is inherently and causally linked to having 'appropriate' political attitudes. My analysis drew attention to the active and situated nature of constructing and negotiating such attitudes. Importantly, it highlighted protesters' concerns with accountability, through focusing on the functional nature of attitude talk.

The second empirical chapter (Chapter 4) continued to explore the facets of talk about protest mobilisation. In particular, it examined various ways in which people formulated motives for their active protest involvement. The analysis focused on the use of instrumentality and emotion arguments in accounting for why it was important for the speakers to take part in demonstrations and other overt protest actions.

I identified two practices through which motive talk was formulated in the interviews. First, the motivation for joining active protest was explained through invoking the concept of duty; specifically, the duty to care for other people and for the wellbeing of the country in general. In developing such duty-centred accounts, interviewees made use of the categories, which, through orientations to category-bound features, were seen as

prescribing a certain degree of responsibility and action. For instance, interviewees portrayed themselves as ‘parents’ who were motivated by the need to ensure a better future for their children and thus became actively involved in protest, in order to deal with the issues that arguably prevented the better future from happening. Speakers also described situations in Russia as ‘objectively’ bad, and thus in dire need to be addressed. Constructing motive in terms of duty functioned to present protest as rational and necessary, and a direct means for fulfilling one’s responsibility. The instrumental character of participants’ motives was further shown through the use of various discursive devices, such as category entitlement, ‘if-then’ formulations and systematic vagueness.

The second strategy of accounting for active protest involvement centred around formulations of negative experiences and the emotions that such experiences triggered. In contrast to the first strategy that displayed protest as motivated by considerations of duty and logical necessity, here speakers predominantly constructed accounts of hurt feelings, thereby emphasising a more self-centred reason for involvement. However, even in occasioning emotional grounds for protest, speakers attended to its rational character. They did so by providing descriptions of the circumstances that caused them to feel bad and by pointing to other people who experienced similar emotions to them. Subjective emotions were thus manufactured as plausible and significant experiences, thereby constituting them as an appropriate basis for action. The analysis of the second strategy also showed that speakers used category entitlement device, by making formulations that positioned them as witnesses to electoral misconduct. Such a device strengthened the facticity of respondents’ accounts, by portraying the misconduct as really happening, in turn warranting the need to address it.

Overall, the second empirical chapter showed that participants routinely oriented to the ideas of duty and moral necessity when legitimating their decisions to join active protest. Protest was cast as an essentially rational act, even when it was presented as motivated by an emotional reaction. I suggested that the two strategies demonstrated speakers’ sensitivity to the negative cultural image of protesters disseminated by the pro-governmental media (White, 2013), and sought to counter them rhetorically, by displaying active involvement as necessary and ethical. The analysis also offered some insights into

the dual pathway model of protest mobilisation (van Zomeren et al., 2004). In particular, I argued that the model's focus on anger as the central emotion behind mobilisation can be broadened to include other emotional reactions.

In the third empirical chapter (Chapter 5), I analysed the process of conversational negotiation of the frequently used protester identity label (Clément, 2013), that of 'the opposition'. The analysis demonstrated that the constructions of protesters' political attitudes and protest activities were constitutive of identity and functioned to accept or reject it. I identified four core patterns of identity negotiation: accepting oppositional membership by claiming possession of criterial attributes, accepting but delimiting oppositional membership by describing specific activities associated with that membership, rejecting oppositional belonging on the grounds of not possessing the 'right' attitudes and motives, and rejecting 'the opposition' as the wrong word.

More specifically, acceptance strategies drew upon culturally available understanding of what it means to be 'in opposition'; membership was then defended through acknowledging one's own attitude as congruent with the conventional oppositional attitude of being dissatisfied with the regime. Such accounts warranted oppositional affiliation as a logical consequence of speaker's views above anything else. I also observed that the claims of membership were muted in several ways, for example, by using hesitations and via indirect acceptance formulations. These observations showed that there was something problematic about the topic of opposition category membership, even though the affiliation itself was not denied.

Denials of oppositional self-categorisation were formulated, first, by addressing the topic of the criterial attributes. That is, interviewees first formulated what the 'right' attitudes and behaviours were, and then made claims about either not possessing them or not behaving in a category-appropriate way. The invocation of category-bounded features (Sacks, 1992) thus provided the grounds for rejecting 'the opposition' as an appropriate self-categorisation. Second, the bases for non-membership were established by discrediting the 'opposition' as a suitable word. For example, some respondents oriented to the political connotations of this word and claimed that they were highly damaging to the public image of protesters, thus displaying the inappropriateness of the opposition

category. Others argued that the word ‘opposition’ had too many meanings and was hence difficult to identify with.

These findings were in line with Clément (2013), who argued that calling a movement ‘oppositional’ risks casting it as predominantly political, which can be inappropriate for the most civic-oriented protesters. However, my analysis went beyond that, in demonstrating that speakers could draw upon different facets of the ‘opposition’ label in carrying out their interactional business. In particular, I suggested that in their accounts my participants managed a dilemma of identification, that is, how to relate to the opposition category without appearing too extreme or ‘political’. Analysis showed how this dilemma was resolved in a number of ways, such as by accepting opposition based on a concrete (attitudinal) understanding and claiming membership in alternative categories that justify protest involvement.

In addition, the analytic findings were consistent with the research looking at discursive protester identity building (Bliuc et al., 2012; Bobel, 2007; Stuart et al., 2013; Selivanova & Goncharov, 2013). Specifically, the analysis reinforced the idea that protesters might try to avoid inferentially challenging identity categories by defining their contents first or claiming alternative category membership.

The last empirical chapter (Chapter 6) focused on the speakers’ accounts regarding people who appear to be uninvolved in protest. There, I found that respondents routinely offered mitigating explanations for non-involvement. Specifically, the analysis focused on the three ways in which speakers accounted for public passivity and presented others as not to blame for their lack of active protest involvement.

First, respondents constructed accounts that attributed inaction to various practical obstacles that are difficult to control. For example, passive members of the public were portrayed as physically having no time to protest due to the need to earn a living. Alternatively, speakers oriented to fear and external pressure as the reasons why people remained uninvolved. In emphasising the effect of practical obstacles, respondents downplayed the agency of the non-involved, thereby resisting the idea that inaction was people’s rational choice. Interestingly, a number of respondents invoked the theory of hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943), using it to support their version of psychological

rationale behind the lack of public involvement. In particular, the theory was called upon to evidence the normatively prescribed character of people's behaviour under harsh circumstances, and ground the argument that, by not taking part in political protests, people in fact behaved in ways appropriate to their environment.

Second, the lack of protest involvement was explained by drawing upon the cultural context in which non-protesters lived their lives. Interviewees formulated inaction as the legacy of the Soviet era, where people were not accustomed to asserting their rights. In so doing, a number of interviewees invoked the culturally available image of the proverbial 'Homo Sovieticus' (Boobbyer, 2000; Rose et al., 2011), a figure who, even if dissatisfied, is highly reluctant or even unable to openly criticise the regime. Suggesting that many non-protesters are essentially 'Soviet' and thus share the 'Soviet' attitude to protest was a way to normalise passive behaviour and make it appear not blameworthy. Formulations of the second discursive strategy thus similarly played down the personal responsibility of non-protesters, by presenting the culture itself as an obstacle to active protest involvement.

The third strategy consisted in warranting the legitimacy of alternative ways of involvement. In particular, a number of interviewees suggested that even though other people did not protest on the streets, they could still make meaningful contributions, such as planting trees or publishing a newspaper. Such mundane and local actions were portrayed as 'real' work and contrasted with street demonstrations, the value of which was reduced through portraying it as shallow and useless activity. The third strategy thus warranted an understanding that people could be involved in other ways rather than overt protest, thereby making a case for a more 'mundane' and practical variety of activism.

The analysis produced some insights relating to the literature. For instance, in contrast to studies reporting that protesters often condemned the broader public for not supporting the protest (Greene, 2014; Smyth et al., 2015; Volkov, 2012b), my data highlighted various ways in which non-participation was accounted for without blaming those uninvolved. Furthermore, the findings have implications for the theories of the social psychology of protest, specifically for the Politicised Identity Model (Klandermans, 1997)

and the idea that protesters would try to display their affiliation with the yet uninvolved public.

Overall, one of the most salient findings from the last empirical chapter was that, notwithstanding that active protest involvement was described as imperative and ethical behaviour overall, as seen in the previous chapter, the lack of involvement was not condemned as immoral or blameworthy. In fact, non-protesters were portrayed as entitled to their behaviour due to circumstances that were largely shown to be out of their control. Indeed, some interviewees pointed to the need to take account of more subtle, local and mundane forms of involvement, which was displayed as more genuine and useful than overt street demonstrations.

Tentatively, I suggested that such patterns of talk could be informed by a twofold concern. First, blaming and complaining can be seen as interactionally dispreferred actions (Heritage, 1984), perhaps even more so for my participants for whom the role of the accuser can be a risky one. Second, explaining other people's lack of involvement in discernibly non-judgemental ways enabled interviewees to present themselves as reasonable and as understanding the multitude of issues other members of the public might have with protest. Such an image can be seen to assist accountability work, being in stark contrast to the media-promoted view of 'hipster' protesters who do not know or wish to know the economic struggles and attitudes of the 'normal' people (Pomerantsev, 2015).

In the following section, I will discuss the nature of accountability and other concerns that can be seen to inform protesters' talk in more detail.

Synthesis of the main analytic findings

In this section, I identify several concerns which seem to run through protesters' talk irrespective of the specific topic they address. Specifically, I focus on the three overarching concerns, namely, sustaining the objectivity and severity of issues in Russia, attributing blame with the government/authorities and warranting impartiality through managing dilemmas of stake. As a result of scrutinising these as a whole, I would like to suggest that the best way to put them into a coherent analytic story is to view them under

the umbrella of a broader accountability concern; specifically, as contributing to making protest involvement accountable. The centrality of social action and accountability for DP analysis has been highlighted many times, not least by Edwards and Potter (2000) who suggested that the accountability of the speaker lies at the heart of conversation, and that the primary objective of discursive psychology should be to explore how various discursive strategies and practices evidence accountability concerns. Indeed, each of the three themes mentioned can be seen as in some way related to the issue of accountability. In what follows, I will discuss the three concerns separately, but it should be remembered that in an actual conversation these were closely intertwined and together contributed to building a 'story' of protesters' lives.

The first shared concern is with sustaining the objectivity and severity of issues in Russia. It is evident from various discursive practices that speakers attempt to portray the situation in Russia as objectively bad. They do so by demonstrating that the problems are directly observable by themselves and others (Chapters 3 and 4) and by displaying their own strong beliefs that the state of affairs is unsatisfactory in warranting their oppositional memberships (Chapter 5). As shown in chapter 3, for example, while describing various ways through which they acquired interest in politics, a number of interviewees specified that they had witnessed and realised transgressions on part of the government (extracts 3.5 and 3.6) and the police (extract 3.7), thus displaying such transgressions as facts of reality. Others described their friends and loved ones as having been aware of the troublesome developments in the political life of the country, even before the speakers themselves had become aware of them. Such constructions functioned to demonstrate the observability of the issues, and manufactured them as true. Similarly, in Chapter 4 interviewees deployed the category of a 'witness' to justify their active protest against the fraudulent 2011 elections. This category is a powerful device for suggesting that the described unjust events really took place (Potter, 1996). Moreover, some speakers (extracts 4.6 and 4.7) argued that someone other than them recognised that what had happened as an injustice. The claim of various witnesses worked to establish consensus, hence bolstering facticity of the described events by appealing to an external warrant (Potter & Edwards, 1990; Rapley, 1998).

The analysis of Chapter 5 pointed to similar facticity concerns. Recall how, in accepting oppositional membership on the grounds of having anti-government views, respondents used extreme-case formulations. For example, the speaker in extract 5.3 argued that ‘all parts of our life here need a change’ (line 19). On the one hand, these constructions functioned to evidence speakers’ oppositional standpoint, and thereby provided legitimate grounds for self-identifying as ‘the opposition’. On the other hand, however, these formulations warranted the severity of the issues in Russia and provided a broad categorisation of the situation as unsatisfactory. Due to their extreme nature, such formulations were most fruitful to carry the work of objectifying the issues and presenting them as existing ‘out there’ (Pomerantz, 1986).

The concern with justifying the existence of troubles in Russia can also be observed in the accounts explored in the last empirical chapter, where respondents provided explanations for the lack of public involvement in protest. As discussed earlier, this topic was problematic for the interviewees because it presented a dilemma — if protest is so important, then why is it that so many people are not involved? One of the implications of such a dilemma is that the troubles in the country were not ‘real’ or not significant enough, because they failed to mobilise the wider public (Volkov, 2012c). The social action of warding off such an inference was bound up in the action of sustaining the objectivity of issues in Russia. For example, speakers specifically provided for the understanding that the issues were objectively present regardless of whether or not this was ‘realised’ (extract 6.1) or ‘seen’ (extract 6.2) by the public. In so doing, the issues were displayed as things that existed beyond human agency, which constituted their objective nature (Latour & Woolgar, 2013). Furthermore, by depicting inaction as a typical Russian/Soviet trait, interviewees implied that some people, especially from the older generations, would not become involved, not because the situation was objectively good, but because of the strong cultural norm not to express protest openly in public. Rhetorically, this argument upholds the validity of issues in Russia by shifting the emphasis on the various ways of expressing dissatisfaction. Hence, the analysis demonstrated that the explanations of public passivity might be strategically used to attend

to the idea that even though some people do not act on them, the issues in Russia are no less present or serious.

The second overarching concern is with attributing blame to the government/authorities. This concern is evident in a shared practice across the interviews to present the government as being directly responsible for the issues in the country, and to provide for the understanding that government irresponsibility in itself constitutes an issue that needs to be addressed.

The first two empirical chapters offer clear evidence of how such practices are accomplished. In Chapter 3, the second of the three strategies of accounting for being interested in politics draws directly upon the idea of the government and the authorities being to blame for both the negative experiences the speakers had, and the issues in the country. In extract 3.5, for example, the interviewee portrayed the president as a liar who openly deluded the public, while in 3.7 the police inspectors were described as ‘conning’ the speaker. In Chapter 4, the second set of motive accounts can be seen to be structured around similar rhetoric, with speakers attending to the idea that certain actions of the election committee were not acceptable and exacerbated the falsifications rather than addressing them. In so doing, the speakers held the committee accountable for not fulfilling their duties and discursively undermined their ability to deal with the issues.

Importantly, these accounts appealed to notions of honesty, responsibility and trust, thus occasioning the moral nature of the state’s misconduct. This is also done by orienting to the apparent discrepancy between the normative obligation of the government to address the country’s issues and its unwillingness to do so. As such, these types of formulations demonstrate the interplay of personal and institutional accountability: by discursively subverting the legitimacy of the state by means of presenting it as blameworthy and immoral, the speakers manage to cast as normative and rightful their own actions, such as becoming interested in politics and subsequently involved in active protest.

The analysis in Chapter 5 offers further insight into the concern with discrediting the government. It is evident from the analysis that their dissatisfaction with the current regime was positioned as a critical attitude in warranting oppositional affiliation. In fact,

a number of the speakers who resisted being categorised as the opposition more generally provided additional descriptions of the circumstances when they *could* have been identified as the opposition, all of which were related to the anti-government stance (extracts 5.7, 5.9 and 5.13). Alternatively, the categories that were offered instead of ‘the opposition’, such as ‘civic activist’ and ‘active citizen/part of the society’ can also be seen in relation to the state, due to their reliance upon the idea of citizenry. Thus, portraying the state as blameworthy was vital for the integrity of participants’ identities.

A similar portrayal was worked up in the accounts analysed in the last empirical chapter. In particular, the government was shown to be responsible for the widespread public inaction in the accounts invoking the issue of ‘traumatised generations’. In extracts 6.6 and 6.7, speakers described the Russian state as routinely deceiving and humiliating its subjects; other interviewees provided more delicate formulations about the state being overly caring, resulting in Russian people losing the ability to stand up for themselves (extract 6.10). Such formulations evidence the speakers’ concern with presenting the state as extremely unhelpful, for both legitimising other people’s inaction, and for continuing the discursive work of persuading the listener that the state is responsible for many Russian woes.

It is possible to see how such concern is interlaced with that discussed above in contributing to interviewees’ accountability. Presenting the issues in Russia as real and serious and holding the state responsible for them provide a powerful framework for building a case for moral discrepancy, that is, a normative breach between what *should be* and what *is* (Housley & Fitzgerald, 2009b). As such, this is a resource for making speakers’ own behaviour accountable: it whittles down the chance of governmental assistance, leaving the people to deal with the situation. In this context, active protest involvement is made justifiable as the speaker’s way of addressing the situation in the country. The shared discursive practice of undermining the status of the government and attributing blame on its part thus assists speakers in taking another step towards constructing their personal accountability.

The third overarching concern I would like to discuss deals with warranting impartiality through managing dilemmas of stake. The nature of the ‘dilemma of stake’

concept is best explained by Edwards and Potter (2000, p. 158), who link it to speakers' struggles to 'produce accounts which attend to interests without being undermined as interested'. My participants seem to join in such a struggle while talking about their political attitudes and beliefs.

Instances of such concern are present in the first empirical chapter. There, the discursive strategies I discussed were used to demonstrate that the speakers were not initially interested in politics and developed such interests through a gradual process of attitudinal change. This was done by orienting to the initial lack of interest and by using non-agentic formulations, such as 'it happened'. Such formulations displayed the absence of stake, which in turn contributed to warranting speakers' neutrality on political matters. Likewise, in Chapter 4, motives for active protest participation were constructed to make available the inference that protest involvement was a rational *reaction* to the circumstances. For example, a number of protesters explicitly countered the idea that they were motivated by selfish interests and economic gains (extracts 4.2, 4.5). Instead, they portrayed their dissent as a duty and highlighted its instrumental role in achieving a better future for all. Those capitalising on 'emotional' vocabularies of motive displayed similar concerns. For instance, while saying that they were primarily motivated by subjective feelings of hurt and humiliation, they took care to display such feelings as rational, thereby protecting themselves from being seen as oversensitive or capricious. Through such practices, then, interviewees navigated the path to being seen as interested and involved but unbiased.

In the third empirical chapter, stake confessions and stake inoculations became intertwined in discursive negotiation of oppositional identity. The analysis demonstrated that participants admitted having certain stakes, such as being 'officially' interested in removing Putin from power. Admission of such a stake was perhaps contextually occasioned, given that respondents were positioned as 'protesters' within the interview, a category conventionally associated with being invested in certain outcomes. At the same time, however, the interviewees worked hard to discount other types of stake, such as having political allegiances. This was done by suggesting the inappropriateness of political inferences of the term 'opposition' and affiliating with observably civic

categories. In the cultural context where politics are viewed with great suspicion (Lukin, 2000), renouncing political allegiance can be seen as a strategy for displaying trustworthiness. In these accounts, then, discursive interplay of stakes shows that speakers are sensitive to matters of impartiality and cultural normativity.

Overall, I suggest that the concerns with sustaining the objectivity of the issues in Russia, attributing blame with the government and warranting impartiality, can be seen as steps in ensuring personal accountability. These discursive actions make available the inferences that the situation is objectively bad and hence requires action. As one of the protesters from Moscow put it, ‘something is not right and I have to do something about it’⁹. One powerful argument regarding protest involvement that can be made in Russia is that people took to the streets for no ‘real’ reason at all; rather, they were doing it for money or for having nothing better to do. There are numerous examples of such rhetoric, one of the most (in)famous being perhaps the 2011 speech by Vladimir Putin. There, he insisted that the election results were fair and that protesters on the streets had no real cause to protest, all the while hinting that the opposition movement was organised and sponsored by the West to destabilise Russia (BBC Russia, 2011). Such rhetoric clearly has an extremely harmful effect on protesters’ accountability. It is perhaps not surprising, then, that protesters display critical concerns with accountability in talk.

A coherent story can then be seen to emerge from the discussion of the overarching concerns. Simplified, the ‘lay’ summary of it would go as follows.

Russia suffers from a number of real and serious problems. The government does not fulfil its role in dealing with such problems; in fact, it actively causes them. Due to various factors, the wider public often has no opportunity to address the issues. There are people, however, who understand the seriousness of the problems and see the state’s unwillingness to resolve them. These people recognise that actively addressing the issues is their duty, and they do so through active protest and more private and local actions. These people do not have anything to gain from protesting; they are driven by a

⁹ This extract is not shown in the thesis.

commonsensical desire to make Russia a better country for everyone. We are these people and our protest is rightful.

I would like to argue that, first of all, this is a story about accountability; specifically, accountability of being a protester in a cultural context where protest is not generally recognised as normative behaviour. Through working on various aspects of this story — sustaining the objectivity of issues in Russia, undermining the ability of the government to deal with the situation, displaying the altruistic nature of their actions, and so on — respondents build up an image of popular protest as a rational and much needed solution to the agglomeration of injustices that plague the country. They strategically design formulations of attitudes, motives and identities to portray the protest movement as a normative reaction to the disrespect of human rights, widespread corruption and governmental fraud. The construction of protest as expected and normative is defended even when the speakers address the question of why so many Russians remain uninvolved. The analysis demonstrates how, by carefully negotiating the agency of the non-protesters, respondents craft an image of them as either lacking the opportunity to become involved or as being involved in alternative ways. In so doing, speakers manage to preserve the generic legitimacy of protest as needed and ethical, *despite* its being the occupation of a minority. While it should be borne in mind that the interview setting in itself can be oriented to the production of accountability accounts — for example, specific questions might have directly solicited accountability talk (Potter & Hepburn, 2012) — there was no indication from the participants that they treated the interview situation any differently than any other ‘real life’ situation. It is therefore reasonable to assume that the interactional issue with accountability of protest involvement is largely the participants’ own concern. My study thus brings to light specific issues at stake for the protesters, to which they attend through talk. Analytic insights form the basis of a number of broader theoretical and methodological contributions my research makes. I will discuss these in the next section.

Methodological contributions

My research makes several methodological contributions. First, it offers a new methodological lens on studying the topic of protest involvement in Russia as the participants' own project. Specifically, my thesis demonstrates the value of paying close attention to people's talk, by highlighting concerns that protesters themselves make relevant. The conceptual framework used in this thesis is a social constructionist approach; it views social reality as something that is *performed* by people. From this view, protest mobilisation, political attitudes and oppositional identity are social constructions that emerge in interactions between people. My study then sets a precedent for the respecification of those psychological phenomena as discursive practices, as resources that are available for use (Edwards & Potter, 2005).

Second, my study makes a case for the use of the research interview as a viable method of discursive research. As such, it questions the validity of the recent move to abandon interviews and turn to a study of 'naturally occurring' talk among the DP scholars (Kent & Potter, 2014; Potter & Hepburn, 2005; 2012). I believe that my thesis highlights the utility of using interviews for the study of topics on which it would be difficult to obtain more naturalistic records. While my data certainly do not pass a 'dead psychologist test' (meaning that they would not exist without the effort of the researcher; Potter, 2002), these are still astonishingly rich and exhibit culturally shared patterns of reasoning and accounting practices (Wooffitt, 1992; Wooffitt & Widdicombe, 2006).

Third, the analysis shows that my Russian participants use various discursive devices and strategies that have been observed in DP research carried out in Western contexts. This suggests that at least some of the devices, such as, for example, three-part lists, extreme case formulations and 'if-then' reasoning are relevant cross-culturally and retain their argumentative power in languages beyond these of the Germanic language branch. A related point here is that my study demonstrates that DP analysis can be fruitfully used to explore data from other cultural contexts and the data that have been translated, in line with the arguments made by other discourse-oriented scholars (Nurjannah et al., 2014; Temple & Young, 2004; Wong & Poon, 2010).

Theoretical contributions

This study contributes to the discursive social psychological research on protest in contemporary Russia, which is still in its infancy. As I have argued, the 2011-2012 wave of protest in Russia is primarily studied in terms of the factors that caused popular mobilisation. For example, scholars discuss the effects of broad systemic factors, such as political opportunity structures, the nature of state-citizen relations, elite competition and so on (Gel'man, 2015; Koesel & Bunce, 2012; Robertson, 2011; 2013; Volkov, 2012a). Other researchers favour demographic explanations, such as the role of class in mobilising the people (Busygina & Filippov, 2015; de Vogel, 2013; Gontmakher & Ross, 2015). Finally, a handful of scholars have considered the role of psychological factors such as shared grievances (Hagemann & Kufenko, 2016) and oppositional attitudes (Shestopal, 2012). All these studies, however, largely neglect the questions regarding the meanings that protest involvement can acquire for those who protest and regarding interpersonal and moral concerns that it might bring to life. Such unanswered questions demonstrate a gap in the literature that this study sought to address by taking a discursive DP approach.

The strength of this approach is in offering an empirical way to study how the phenomenon of 'protest involvement' is talked into being by protesters themselves. It thus gave me an opportunity to catch a glimpse of the variability of meanings attributed to protest, and to trace how these were strategically drawn upon in dealing with the questions of motive, commitment, choice and morality. Most importantly, DP analysis presented these topics not as abstract theoretical variables, but as participants' practical concerns. With regard to this, I would like to make a related theoretical observation.

The observation relates to the potentially troublesome categorisation of the 2011-2012 protest in Russia as 'political'. Contemporary Russia has been viewed largely as an apolitical society, where 'avoiding politics is a widespread rule of conduct' (Clément, 2015, p. 213; see also Shlapentokh & Woods, 2007). Due to this, the large-scale popular protests of late 2011 came as a surprise for many. A number of scholars were quick to discuss popular mobilisation as a primarily political phenomenon (Chuvashova; 2013;

Seleznov, 2013). Other authors, however, called for more caution. For instance, it has been argued that glossing popular dissent as ‘political’ fails to consider that the movements’ demands were predominantly civic (Clément, 2013). Along similar lines, Aron (2013, p. 63) suggested that the dissent of 2011-2012 was motivated by moral concerns above all, and was primarily ‘rooted in the quest for dignity in democratic citizenship’ rather than political change. My own findings lend support to such arguments: interviewees display great sensitivity towards politically-related topics, which is especially evident in Chapters 3 and 5.

In saying this, I do not make any ontological argument about what the nature of the 2011-2012 protests really was. If anything, my study demonstrates the futility of the very attempt to find out the only correct description of these events. Moreover, it raises important epistemological questions about the differences between the political and the social. For example, how can we know whether something is ‘political’ or ‘social’ *in abstracto*, and what would that mean? As the interviewee in extract 5.15 rightly pointed out, labelling something as ‘political’ can in itself be a political act that has certain implications. As such, my research challenges the appropriateness of pre-existing distinctions between various kinds of protest, and specifically theoreticians’ attempts to categorise a protest as unambiguously political. It is important to remember, however, that people themselves constantly make such distinctions and put them to work; exploring these practices is a much more worthy objective of the research.

As a concluding contribution, I believe my study to be of use for discursive social psychologists, as well as for the more cognitively-oriented colleagues from the discipline of social psychology, interested in contentious behaviour beyond the Russian context. For the former, my research offers a potentially interesting illustration of applying DP in the context of a relatively new speech community (Bolden, 2008). In addition, my analysis furthers research into the mechanisms of accountability practices carried out in particular contexts. For instance, my study highlights the relevance of constructing ‘out-there-ness’ of various phenomena in managing one’s accountability as a protester, and thus contributes to the broader research exploring the links between facticity, agency and accountability in talk (Potter, 1996; Potter & Edwards, 1990; Wooffitt, 1992).

For the more cognitively-oriented colleagues, my thesis offers a number of insights into the dominant models of collective behaviour, such as the dual pathway model of collective behaviour (Simon et al., 1998) and politicised collective identity model (Simon & Klandermans, 2001). For example, PCI generally assumes that contentious behaviour is rooted in collective identity: people protest because they recognise their membership in a collective and act upon it (van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2007; Wright, 2001). My analyses of interactional management of opposition identity and motives for protest involvement urge a more nuanced interpretation of this argument, in evidencing that protesters do not necessarily treat their protest actions in close relation to their collective identities. Furthermore, the findings of the third analytic chapter give further insight into idea of opinion-based group membership, advocated by Bliuc, McGarty and colleagues (Bliuc et al., 2007; McGarty et al., 2009; McGarty et al., 2014). My research thus demonstrates the value of insight that can come from the fine-grained analysis of talk about protest involvement.

Finally, my analytic observations, especially those regarding the delicate nature of categorising oneself as a part of the ‘opposition’, can be used to inform experimental designs. For instance, because of the centrality of the social identity explanation in theory of collective action engagement, the survey research often includes measures of collective identification. It does so through asking participants to rate such statements as ‘I see myself as a member of X’ or ‘I identify with X’, X here being the name of the group or the movement. For example, in the landmark study by Simon et al. (1998) this is precisely how the strength of collective identity was conceptualised. In Russia, in the absence of a specific name for the protest movement, ‘the opposition’ seems to become adopted as the ‘official’ protest category (Clément, 2013; Gel’man, 2015). Thus in theory, if a researcher considers conducting a survey about social protest in Russia, (s)he might use the label of ‘the opposition’ in measuring the strength of collective identification. What my research demonstrates, however, is the highly sensitive nature of this label. The insights from the study of protesters’ talk can therefore be used to sensitise researchers of protest to the ways in which interpersonal and interactional concerns can inform the production of categories.

Overall then, my study is relevant as it demonstrates the variety of tacit ways in which language can be used to justify active protest involvement. Various interactional practices can be seen as discursive vehicles for generating one's accountability as a protester and warranting the plausibility of the existence of protest. My findings can be used as a starting point for a further exploration of the meanings and understandings of protest actions in contemporary Russia, and, potentially, to make practical recommendations regarding the 'working vocabularies' of popular mobilisation.

Reflections and future research suggestions

In this section, I reflect briefly on the ways in which I, as the researcher, interviewer and analyst, might have influenced the research process and its results. I subsequently point to the ways in which my study can be developed for future research.

In Chapter 2, I mentioned that one of the important methodological issues in discursive research is how researchers 'shape' their data and analyses. This issue offers a good starting point for reflection. On this point, Willig (2013) suggested that there are two kinds of reflexivity in qualitative research: the first includes being aware of the ways in which the researcher's personality might have shaped a study (personal reflexivity) and the second involves reflecting upon how the design of the study and methods of analysis might have defined and limited the findings (epistemological reflexivity).

In terms of personal reflexivity, I agree with Schenkein (1978, p. 62) who argued that 'the kinds of phenomena we choose to mull over will depend on our own 'identities''. I am aware that my personal interests affected the focus of the empirical chapters to an extent. Analysts who have worked with qualitative data would be aware that even a short conversation might produce a multitude of potential topics for analysis, and one must make a choice. My choices were guided by the data but also, inevitably, by my own concerns: for example, being particularly interested in motives for active protest involvement and preoccupied with the question of whether the 'opposition' is an appropriate label for protesters, I included such topics in my interview schedule and conducted extended analyses of them in Chapters 4 and 5.

Another way in which my ‘identity’ might be seen as consequential for the research concerns the occasions when respondents appeared to treat me as a fellow Russian and as someone who supported the opposition and protests (I explicitly mentioned my positive attitude to protest before each interview). On such occasions, interviewees used phrases such as ‘you know’, ‘as a Russian you know this’ and so on, constructing and displaying common grounds between us. In other cases, people would tell me that there was no point in talking about why protest was important, because it should be self-explanatory for someone like me¹⁰.

It is possible to suggest that, because some interviewees treated me as ‘one of them’, certain explanations were not as extended or warranted as they might have been if I was treated as an outsider. As an illustration, in extract 6.9 the interviewee formulated a reason for inaction and said it was why ‘Moscow didn’t get that million’ (line 10), to which the interviewer replied ‘aha aha’ (line 11); after this, the interviewee moved on to producing an upshot. I would argue that the utterance ‘Moscow didn’t get that million’ was left unpacked because the interviewee displayed her understanding of it. Indeed, I closely followed discussions on the Internet about protests in Moscow at the time, and was aware of a particularly fierce ‘Million’ debate, that is, discussion of the reasons why the protests, although large-scale, did not attract the majority of people. It is difficult to be sure, but an interviewer less familiar with the situation might have requested an explanation of that utterance, or the interviewee might have offered it.

Similarly, when respondents talked about Alexei Navalny being found guilty in court, they arguably did not need to unpack why such a verdict may be unfair and ‘too much’ (extract 5.12:12) or why it was a ‘pseudo-court’ (extract 4.9:20). This is so because the interviewees treated me as someone who already understood and accepted the illegitimacy of the court and the decision. It can therefore be argued that my status as ‘Russian’ and ‘protest supporter’ had a certain impact on speakers’ accounts, in terms of minimising the need to account for claims.

¹⁰ This extract is not shown in the thesis.

Lastly, my fascination was with protesters who I considered ‘ordinary’, that is, who were not political activists or members of organised political movements. Although I recruited people who ‘fitted’ this description, I tried to avoid using the term ‘ordinary protester’ as a straightforward uncritical label, since that would go against my methodological commitment to study people’s own descriptions and categories. However, sometimes it appeared essential to use it in order to make my arguments easier to understand. In a somewhat similar way, I used the term ‘protester’ in this thesis, because I considered this to be the most ‘neutral’ label to refer to my participants. Strictly speaking, neither of these categories is *analytically* sound, since I did not study whether my participants invoked them. Nonetheless, I believe that my use of such labels was justified, on the grounds that they were used as a practical means for engaging with participants, rather than as ‘objective’ and legitimate analytic categories.

My research also certainly changed me, as a person and a scholar. Together with increasing my knowledge about the social psychology of protest behaviour more generally, and on protest in Russia in particular, the study taught me the value of staying close to the data and demonstrated the power of analytic insight that the analysis of a single account can produce. This strengthened my belief in discursive psychology and its quest for the exploration of the concepts of social psychology in discursive terms, as situated, multifaceted and functional descriptions. In addition, while listening to the stories of my interviewees, I was often moved (and humbled) by the strength of their belief in the possibility of democracy in Russia, and by their desire to continue fighting against all the odds. Because of this, I am now even more certain that Russia will change for the better one day, provided that non-violent civic protest continues, in some way. This last stipulation is important, for I have also learnt that protest does not need to be overt or organised. Indeed, my participants taught me that people can work to improve the situation in the country in their own subtle ways, by behaving morally in daily life and refusing to participate in unjust practices, such as bribery. This ‘mundane activism’, I believe, is the main tool for the country’s positive social and political transformation.

In terms of epistemological reflexivity, there are three points worth making.

First, I would like to reflect upon the ways in which the practice of interview might have shaped my data. Although I stand by my argument made in Chapter 2, that interviews should be treated as ordinary conversations *unless* we can empirically observe that they are treated otherwise by the interactants, it would be unhelpful to deny that some features of the interview setup might have given rise to certain constructions. For example, I recruited my respondents as ‘people who took part in protests’, and in Chapter 5, I showed how this might have produced an interactional problem for the speakers who rejected oppositional affiliation. Thus, the recruitment strategy itself became consequential for interviewees’ conversational conduct, by privileging specific understanding and prompting speakers to engage with it, for example, through claiming alternative category membership which had the potential to explain their contentious actions.

In addition to this, my active position as the interviewer certainly shaped the data. The analysis demonstrated instances where my lack of uptake may have led interviewees to formulate further explanations and descriptions (in extracts 4.2, 5.10, 6.1). The phrasing of the questions too can have significant implications. In the analysis of extract 5.10, I pointed out that the interviewer’s question was designed to index her disbelief, and thus could be interpreted by the interviewee as a challenge to his earlier rejection of oppositional membership. Subsequently, the respondent worked to justify his rejection by formulating two more reasons for it. Similarly, in Chapter 6, I discussed how some of my questions depicted non-protesters as blameworthy, and how in their responses interviewees dealt with that accusation by downplaying the non-protester’s agency. Therefore, I was aware that my method of data collection and the assumptions that I made (for example, that respondents were ‘protesters’) must be treated as important elements of the research process and accordingly considered them in my analyses.

The second reflection concerns the evaluation of the findings in terms of their representativeness. From the standpoint of mainstream social psychology, the sample size of 48 interviews is relatively small and would not be considered representative. However, it has been argued that in qualitative research, particularly in the research focused on social interaction, issues of representativeness and generalisability take a different form from ‘traditional’ social science enquiries (Golafshani, 2003; Peräkylä, 2004). More

specifically, while my research may be not ‘representative’ in terms of its ability to extrapolate the findings from specific cases to general populations, it has more scope for analytic generalisability (Widdicombe & Wooffitt, 1995; Willig, 2013). In that sense, research is generalisable because it generates generalisable theoretical insights.

For example, in my thesis I have identified a number of language strategies employed by respondents. However, such strategies are not unique to my interviewees, nor are they specific to a social group of protesters in Russia. Rather, they are part of the culturally available communicative skills and practices that people use to make their actions recognisable and claims justified. In principle, these language strategies are available to all members of culture/society, and in that way they are generalisable beyond the particular interactional context of a given interview. Hence, a stock of my analytic findings regarding the ways in which protesters deal with certain interactional and interpersonal issues and about the functional nature of their constructions can, at least potentially, be made relevant in other social situations and communities.

The last point of epistemological reflection touches upon the issue of research design; specifically, the effect of studying retrospective accounts of protest produced in post hoc interviews, rather than, for example, contemporaneous accounts produced during protest events. Before carrying out my fieldwork in Russia, I decided against doing interviews *during* protests, for two reasons. First, I considered it to be a difficult task from a practical point of view. By the time I was collecting my interviews in 2013, the large-scale protests were declining, and it was difficult to predict whether there would be a possibility for me to join demonstrations and collect enough data for research. In addition, my fieldwork time was limited, and strict organisation was a priority. Because of this, it was more feasible to schedule interviews with protesters in advance while I was still in Scotland, so that everything was in place when I arrived in Russia. Second, there were subjective reasons too: personally, I was not comfortable with collecting interviews with people during protest.

It is reasonable to suggest that contemporaneous accounts would be different in nature and design. Asking people to take part in the interviews while on the street would almost certainly result in shorter question-answer accounts rather than in lengthy

discussions. Furthermore, the interview setting would be more informal, as there would be little opportunity or time to conduct interviews according to a schedule. An interesting related point was made by Shotter (1981), who argued that contemporaneous and retrospective accounts were likely to have different justification strategies. Specifically, he suggested that contemporaneous accounts, because they are being formulated ‘now’, as a given event unfolds, describe a state of affairs that is *already* likely to be seen as existing in reality; in this way, such accounts need less justification through reference to ‘facts’ or people having ‘proper’ motives for making them. On the other hand, retrospective accounts require more accounting work to prove their veracity, because they are reports of something that happened in the past, which by that token might or might not be ‘true’. Shotter therefore suggested that contemporaneous accounts could be expected to be justified differently from retrospective claims, by emphasising their sincerity, for instance, rather than their facticity. Lastly, it is possible to add to this a hypothesis that during a protest action, in the heat of the moment, people are more orientated towards certain discursive actions, such as, for instance, assigning blame, trouble-telling and constructing shared emotional and moral outrage (Reed, 2004).

However, all this does not mean that retrospective accounts are in some way inferior. Here, it is important to remember one of the main premises of discursive psychology, that in talking about their past experiences, motives and so on, people do not merely report things as they were; rather, they actively construct situated versions of events and pragmatically use them in relation to the interactional business at hand. In this way, it would be wrong to say that retrospective accounts are ‘objectively’ less correct than contemporaneous ones. Moreover, there is evidence to suggest that retrospective accounts are advantageous for respondents themselves, as they allow deep self-reflection and, in so doing, enable people to comprehend what happened to them (Smith, 1994). Indeed, several of my respondents said that they decided to participate in my study in order to make sense of their protest experiences and explain their behaviour first of all to themselves. This being said, collecting contemporaneous accounts might be a fruitful avenue for future research. If such research supported some of the findings of my study — for instance, if protesters resisted oppositional membership and downplayed the

political aspect of their protest — then there would be grounds to argue, for instance, that there is indeed a problem with being seen as ‘political’ in Russia.

Together with collecting contemporaneous accounts, my study can be developed further in other ways. First, future research might include attempts to gather more ‘naturalistic’ data. I have previously argued that due to the nature of the topic, it might be difficult to have access to more ‘mundane’ conversations that do not require the presence of the researcher; while this is indeed so, one may think of potential opportunities. For instance, during my fieldwork in Russia, participants told me about a number of places where protesters often gather to chat and relax. It is possible to collect direct records of interactions in such places; however, there is a certain risk that people would refuse to participate, as they might find the idea of being recorded uncomfortable or even suspicious. Another avenue for more ‘naturalistic’ research might be to observe and analyse official video debates between the leaders of the opposition and political activists (for instance, Dozhd’, 2012). This would provide an opportunity to explore how members of the higher protest ‘rank’ construct and use the notions of protest in interaction, thus complementing my focus on more ‘ordinary’ and unaffiliated protesters. Also, video recordings would provide more scope for the analysis. In discursive research, especially among conversation analytic studies, there has been a growing tendency to use video recordings, as these are believed to provide a fuller picture of interaction and enrich the understanding of the variety of paralinguistic resources that participants can draw on in accomplishing social actions (Heath, 2004; Kent & Potter, 2014; MacMartin & LeBaron, 2006). Given that ‘artful’ forms of protest have been proliferating under Putin’s regime (Jonson, 2015), paralinguistic expressions and bodily practices might be particularly relevant and further exploration could offer a better understanding of the contemporary development of protest in Russia.

Another potential for future research is to use my findings to develop an integrative analysis of protest construction; that is, explore the topic from both the local interactional perspective and the broader standpoint of critical discourse analysis. My methodology of choice, discursive psychology, is sometimes criticised by more critically oriented discursive scholars for its reluctance to go beyond the data and to take account of the

‘broader picture’ in the form of wider cultural, political and moral discourses (Burr, 2015; Kaposi, 2013). While such reluctance is understandable given DP’s close alliance with conversation analysis, there is no basis for rejecting the possibility of developing a dialogue between micro and macro-level approaches (Kaposi, 2013; Schegloff, 1997). Such research would include paying attention to local discursive practices identified through close reading of the data, as well as attempts to interpret the data in terms of broader socio-political and moral frameworks (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002; Wetherell, 1998). Integrative analysis of protest might be particularly advantageous in the Russian context: due to the uneasy history of dissent and contemporary anti-protest propaganda, there appears to be considerable scope for studying how ‘broader’ historical and cultural understandings (for example, of the Soviet ‘norm’ of inaction or the media image of ‘brainwashed’ protesters) are manifested in, and intertwined with, more local practices of accountability done by people in interactions. In addition, due to its integrative nature, such research would have the capacity to reach more scholars across multiple fields of study (Miller & Fox, 2004), which would also be beneficial for the burgeoning but still somewhat limited field of research on Russian protest.

The last point of this discussion touches on the future possibility of including a greater variety of participants, in terms of sampling people from different geographical areas. There is a conceptual reason for such an approach, as it would increase variability in the data and help to see whether there are specific language strategies employed by people from specific contexts. While my research did not find evidence for such a claim, it still primarily focused on protesters from Moscow and Saint Petersburg. In future work, it will be valuable to enrol more participants from the regional cities, as there is some evidence that patterns of protest there might differ from the capitals (Il’chenko, 2015; Lobanova & Semenov, 2015).

Conclusion

My thesis is the first attempt to study popular protest in contemporary Russia as discursive construction manufactured in talk. I provided detailed analyses of interviews

conducted with people involved in protest in Russia, regarding their attitudes, motives and behaviour, and identities. Applying the analytic lens of discursive psychology to my data enabled empirical examination of the various ways in which protest realities were dynamically produced and negotiated *in situ*. Throughout the thesis, I identified several strategies used by my participants to discuss their political attitudes, formulate motives for active protests involvement, manage their oppositional identities and account for inaction of other people.

Specifically, I showed that dealing with political interest attributions was problematic, and that such attributions were closely linked to constructions of attitudinal change, where transitions from being uninterested and uninvolved in the past to being interested in the present were carefully warranted, not as intentional acts but as something that inevitably took place in the circumstances. In contrast to this, active protest involvement was firmly established as a rational and deliberate choice, regardless of whether it was motivated by the awareness of a threatening situation or by subjective feelings of moral outrage. I found that respondents did not necessarily identify as members of the opposition, even though they were involved in active protest and hence could be seen as such. Both denials and avowals of oppositional membership appeared to be closely related to normative and interactional concerns, such as not appearing extreme or ‘political’ and defending one’s accountability as an interviewee. Finally, I showed that protesters did not blame others for not taking part in protests; on the contrary, they depicted such behaviour as accountable by drawing upon culturally available notions regarding people’s inaction, and specifically upon the idea that there are obstacles on the way to protesting that are beyond people’s control.

Overall, my thesis demonstrates that people’s ways of speaking should be understood as actions through which they are able to construct versions of the world and explain themselves and others. In so doing, it reinforces the somewhat simple but powerful idea that in order to explain oneself, one needs to build a suitable version of the world, one that ‘fits’ with the initial claim and thus makes it justified (Edwards & Potter; 2000). In this way, my thesis has been an exploration of the worlds in which my participants live and act. Although performative, such worlds are no less real than ‘objective’ reality; one

may claim that they become realities once articulated (Melucci, 1996). They thus deserve to be studied with great diligence and attention.

My focus on how talk manufactures protest realities represents a significant departure from the mainstream study of protest in social psychology. Thus, an important goal of my thesis was to open up a space for a post-cognitivist, discursive way of understanding phenomena related to protest behaviour within a predominantly cognitivist discipline. Discursive in nature, it is to be hoped that my study managed to demonstrate the extreme complexity and difficulty of addressing seemingly straightforward topics related to protest, especially in the cultural context where protest involvement is often seen as not normative. I believe that it is vital for social psychologists to be aware of such complexities and contextual specifics, especially if the discipline is willing to preserve its ‘social’ status. Fortunately, there is already a greater awareness of the potential of discursive research for explaining and understanding how protest mobilises and develops; it is my sincere hope that both the awareness and the number of discursive studies of protest will continue to grow.

As I mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, my work began with fascination inspired by the Russian protest movement. After years of research, this fascination remains, and so does hope. The talk of hope is perhaps surprising, because as I write these concluding remarks in 2016, it seems that large-scale popular protest has all but died out in Russia once again. The famous oppositional politician Boris Nemtsov is dead, murdered in the centre of Moscow, just a stone’s throw from the Kremlin; opposition leader Alexei Navalny is prohibited from running in any election because of the fake criminal charges; Russian State Duma passes draconian laws one after another and even some of my participants, with whom I am still in touch, seem to be greatly disillusioned with protesting as such. The protest wave of 2011-2012, it seems, did not account for much. However, I strongly believe that all is not lost. My thesis offers evidence to suggest that in contemporary Russia, the very notions of state-society relations are being reworked, and understanding of protest as something extra-ordinary is being challenged by the new sets of meanings, which affirm that it is right to be interested in politics, feel responsible for

the fate of one's country and act when one sees an injustice being committed. These are the very meanings that, I believe, will succeed in changing Russia for the better.

I would like to end this thesis with a quote from one of my favourite scholars of protest, James Jasper (2008, p. 379), that captures my position on protest in Russia perfectly:

'Seeing social movements as a source of vision and voice, rather than the vanguard of a new world, I am not bothered by the fact that they accomplish so few of their stated goals. These goals are often overdrawn; the importance of protesters, I think, lies more in their moral visions than their practical accomplishments'.

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Appendix A. Information Sheet

Project Title:

Attitudes to oppositional activity in Russia

I invite you to participate in this research, which I conduct as part of my PhD at the School of Philosophy, Psychology and Language Studies at the University of Edinburgh. I am interested in your views on opposition in Russia, and in your experience of taking part in oppositional activities.

What will happen if you agree?

If you decide to participate, I will ask you to take part in an informal interview that will last for up to 1 hour. I'd like to talk to you about your views on the opposition and your place in it, and about your personal experience of participating in protest. I will record the interview with your permission. Your interview recording will be transcribed and analysed; anonymised extracts from it may be cited in my PhD thesis and in professional journals. Audio recording and transcribed version will be securely stored on my PC, and treated with full confidentiality. The only personal information possibly mentioned about you will be your gender, age and occupation. The only people who will have access to the full interview will be me and my supervisors.

Are there any benefits/potential risks to taking part?

There are no serious risks associated with your participation. If during the interview you feel uncomfortable, please feel free to stop or ask for a change of subject. Hearing your views will help me to better understand how people relate to opposition in Russia and how they make sense of their oppositional experience.

Participant rights.

You are free to withdraw at any time without having to give an explanation. You do not have to answer a question if you do not want to. You can ask for your interview to be withdrawn, but please notify me before the 1st of January 2014 (please contact me on y.lukyanova@sms.ed.ac.uk).

This research has been granted Ethical Approval from the University of Edinburgh Ethics Committee. It is designed in accordance with the University of Edinburgh's Research Ethics Framework and the BPS Ethical Principles for Conducting Research with Human Participants.

If you have any questions, please ask me now.

If you would like to find out more about the study, please contact me.

Thank you very much for taking part in the study!

Contact details:

Yulia Lukyanova, y.lukyanova@sms.ed.ac.uk

Dr Sue Widdicombe, supervisor s.widdicombe@ed.ac.uk

Appendix B. Consent Form

Project Title:

Attitudes to oppositional activity in Russia

I'd be grateful if you could sign this form to ensure that you are willing to participate in my research. Please remember that participation in the research is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any stage. You can ask for your interview to be withdrawn, but please notify me before the 1st of January 2014 (please contact me on y.lukyanova@sms.ed.ac.uk). Signing this form does not commit you to anything you do not wish to do.

By signing below, you are agreeing that: (1) you have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet, (2) questions about your participation in this study have been answered satisfactorily, (3) you are aware of the potential risks (if any), (4) you agree to the interview being tape-recorded, (5) you allow me to use (anonymised) quotes from your interview in my research, and possibly in professional journals, and (6) you are taking part in this research study voluntarily, and without coercion.

Participant's Name (Printed)*

Participant's signature*

Date

Name of person obtaining consent (Printed)

Signature of person obtaining consent

*If you wish to preserve your anonymity, you can use your initials.

Appendix C. Debriefing Sheet

Project Title:

Attitudes to oppositional activity in Russia

This research is conducted as part of my PhD thesis at the School of Philosophy, Psychology and Language Sciences, The University of Edinburgh. The main purpose of this project is to understand the views, identities and experiences of people who take part in various oppositional activities. Such understanding is important as it helps to gain a much better insight on the nature of the non-systemic opposition in Russia.

Your interview recording will be transcribed and analysed by me; anonymised extracts from it may be cited in my PhD thesis and in professional journals. Audio recording and transcript will be securely stored on my PC.

I would like to thank you for your time. I appreciate your participation. I understand that our discussion may have raised some difficult issues or memories for you; if you have any troubles or uncertainty regarding your participation in the research, please feel free to contact me (Yulia Lukyanova) on y.lukyanova@sms.ed.ac.uk and I will do my best to help you.

If you would like to know more about the study and how your interview is used, please contact me and I will provide you with up-to-date information on the research. Please note that the final results will be available after I finish my PhD.

Thank you very much for taking part in the study!

Appendix D. Interview schedule

For everyone

1. Have you ever been involved in a political party or a social movement?

- if yes – What party/movement? Why? Are you still a member?
- if no – Have you ever been interested in politics or political situation in Russia?
 - When did you become interested? Were there any events/situations that interested you? Please tell me more.

2. What are your views on politics and political/social situation in Russia?

Have your views changed in any way?

- For example, in the light of recent political events (Putin's third presidency, controversial Duma elections), would you say your views have changed?
- For example, in the light of the recent protests, would you say your views have changed in any way? How and why?

3. Would you call yourself a part of the opposition?

- What is your relation to the opposition?
- What does 'opposition' mean for you?

Membership (for those who said 'Yes, I am a part of the opposition')

4. Being a part of the opposition – what does it mean for you?

- What do you feel/do that makes you a part of opposition? Can you give me an example? Why this quality/activities in particular?
- Whom would you hesitate to call 'a part of the opposition?' What makes them different from you? Why is that?

5. Can you tell me about your protest experience? What have you done?

- Have you been to a protest or a demonstration?
- Have you done something you consider oppositional/a protest recently?
- Do you do it often? Would you say it is a part of your ordinary life/daily routine?

6. Why are you taking part in the activities you told me about?

- Are these activities important for you? Why? What are your motives?
- What is it you are hoping to achieve by taking part in the opposition?
- Are you hoping to make a change? Influence political situation? Social situation?

People themselves? Please tell me more.

6.1. As a member of the opposition, what are your goals?

- Is it easy to achieve these goals in today's Russia? Why or why not?
- Can you think of anything that might prevent you from achieving the goals you mentioned? Can you give me some examples?

Support (for those who said 'I'm not the opposition, but I support them')

4. Supporting the opposition/being [respondent's category] – what does it mean for you?

- How different is that from 'being the opposition'? Whom would you call 'the opposition'? What is the main difference?
- What is it that makes you a 'supporter'/'sympathiser'/[respondent's category]?

5. Can you tell me about your protest experience? What have you done?

- Have you been to a protest or a demonstration?
- Have you done something you consider as 'support of opposition' recently?
- Do you do it often? Would you say it is a part of your ordinary life/daily routine?

6. Why are you taking part in these activities you told me about?

- Are these activities important for you? Why? What are your motives?
- What is it you are hoping to achieve by supporting the opposition?
- Are you hoping to make a change? Influence political situation? Social situation?

People themselves? Please tell me more.

6.1. As supporter of the opposition/[participant's category], what are your goals?

- Is it easy to achieve these goals in today's Russia? Why or why not?
- Can you think of anything that might prevent you from achieving the goals you mentioned? Can you give me some examples?

Avoidance of category (for those who said 'I have no relation to opposition')

4. How would you call what you are doing? Why? What does it involve?

- How different is what you do from the 'oppositional' activity?
- Whom would you call 'a part of the opposition?' What makes them different from you? What about 'supporters' of the opposition?

5. Can you tell me about your protest experience? What have you done?

- Have you been to a protest or a demonstration?
- Have you done something you consider as 'protest' recently?
- Do you do it often? Would you say it is a part of your ordinary life/daily routine?

6. Why are you taking part in these activities you told me about?

- Are these activities important for you? Why? What are your motives?
- What is it you are hoping to achieve by doing them?
- Are you hoping to make a change? Influence political situation? Social situation?

People themselves? Please tell me more.

6.1. Do you have any goals then?

- Is it easy to achieve these goals in today's Russia? Why or why not?
- Can you think of anything that might prevent you from achieving the goals you mentioned? Can you give me some examples?

For everyone.

7. Is your protest (or participant's category) important for you as a Russian?

Why?

- Do you think it is important for the country?
- Is your protest connected to your feelings of citizenship?
- Do you think protesting is a matter of national importance?

8. Do people around you know what you are doing?

- Your friends or relatives? Maybe colleagues at work?
- Do you tell other people about what you do?
- Do you share what you do with other people?

8.1 Do you think it is important to tell other people, to involve them? Why?

8.2 How do people around you react to what you do?

- Do they support/oppose you? What do they think about recent protests?
- Do they share your views? Do they share 'oppositional' views?

9. Is there anything else you'd like to mention that we haven't talked about?

10. Thank you very much, our interview has ended. Now I'd like to ask some information about you (in case they did not answer these during the interview) – age (or age group, 18-24/25-34/35-44/45-54/55-64/65-74/75 or higher) and occupation, if that is fine with you.

Appendix E. Transcription symbols (adapted from Jefferson, 2004b)

(0.5)	Numbers in round brackets indicate a pause in tenths of a second.
(.)	A dot in parentheses indicates a micro pause (less than 2/10 of a second).
[]	Square brackets indicate beginning of overlapping talk.
right=	Equals sign indicates ‘latching’, where there is no pause between turns.
<u>never</u>	Underlining indicates emphasis on words or syllables.
YES	Capital letters indicate words said noticeably louder than surrounding talk.
°yeah°	Degree signs indicate noticeably quieter speech and whispering.
£ heh	The pound sterling sign indicates smiley voice or ‘suppressed’ laughter.
↑It was↓	Pointed arrows indicate increased a marked rising or falling intonation shift
>lets’ say<	Talk in brackets is pronounced noticeably quicker than surrounding talk.
wha-	A dash indicates the sharp cut off of the prior word or sound.
yeah?	Question marks indicate a ‘questioning’ (i.e., rising) intonation.
hhhh	Voiced laughter; the more ‘hh’ the longer the laughter.
.hh	An ‘h’ preceded by a dot indicates intake of breath/exhalation.
um::	Colons indicate elongation of the prior sound or letter; the more colons the greater the extent of the stretching.
((name))	Double parentheses indicate non-verbal activity, describe words that have been removed to maintain anonymity or show transcriber’s annotations.